



A N
APOLOGY
FOR THE LIFE OF
COLLEY CIBBER.
COMEDIAN
WRITTEN BY HIMSELF

VOL. II.

LONDON
MDCCL.

after; my Reception there not only turn'd to my Account, but seem'd a fair Invitation, that I would make my Visits more frequent: But, to give over a Winner, can be no very imprudent Resolution.



C H A P. VI.

The Author's first Step upon the Stage. His Discouragements. The best Actors in Europe, ill-us'd. A Revolution, in their Favour. King William grants them a Licence to act in Lincoln's-Inn Fields. The Author's Distress, in being thought a worse Actor than a Poet. Reduc'd to write a Part for himself. His Success. More Remarks, upon Theatrical Action. Some, upon himself.

HAVING given you the State of the Theatre, at my first Admission to it; I am now drawing towards the several Revolutions it suffer'd, in my own Time. But (as you find by the setting out of my History) that I always intended myself the Heroe of it, it may be necessary to let you know me, in my Obscurity, as well as in my higher Light, when I became one of the Theatrical Triumvirat.

The Patentees, who were now Masters of this united, and only Company of Comedians, seem'd to make it a Rule, that no young Per-

sons, desirous to be Actors, should be admitted into Pay under, at least, half a Year's Probation; wisely knowing, that how early soever they might be approv'd of, there could be no great fear of losing them, while they had, then, no other Market to go to. But, alas! Pay was the least of my Concern; the Joy, and Privilege of every Day seeing Plays, for nothing, I thought was a sufficient Consideration, for the best of my Services. So that it was no Pain to my Patience, that I waited full three Quarters of a Year, before I was taken into a Salary of Ten Shillings *per* Week; which, with the Assistance of Food, and Raiment, at my Father's House, I then thought a most plentiful Accession, and myself the happiest of Mortals.

The first Thing that enters into the Head of a young Actor, is that of being a Heroe: In this Ambition I was soon snubb'd, by the Insufficiency of my Voice; to which might be added, an uninform'd meagre Person (tho' then not ill made) with a dismal pale Complexion. Under these Disadvantages, I had but a melancholy Prospect of ever playing a Lover, with Mrs. *Bracegirdle*, which I had flatter'd my Hopes, that my Youth might one Day, have recommended me to. What was most promising in me, then, was the Aptness of my Ear; for I was soon allow'd to speak justly, tho' what was grave and serious, did not equally become me. The first Part, therefore, in which I appear'd, with any glimpse of Success,



P. Lely Pinx.

Thomas Otway

Printed for Tho: Bowles next the Chapter House in S.^t Pauls Church Yard & In^o Bowles at y^e Black Horse in Cornhill London.



J. Kneller Pinx.



M^{rs} BRACEGIRDLE.

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Flahy Pins.

Thomas Otway

Printed for the Bookseller at the Chapter-Door in St Pauls Church-Yard & In Bowles at y^e Black-Horse in Cornhill London.



Mrs. BRACFORD.



The Heroick and Victorious Prince,
CHARLES the XII.th KING of SWEDEN. *Goths Vand.^{ls} &c.*
Who on the 20th of November 1700. Obtain'd a Signal Victory over y^e Muscovite at Narva
This Effigies is humbly Dedicated to y^e Hon^{ble} S^t. Jacob Banks K^t. by R. White. (Printed and Sold by John King, Globe against the Church in the P^l.)

cess, was the Chaplain in the *Orphan of Otway*. There is in this Character (of one Scene only) a decent Pleasantry, and Sense enough to shew an Audience, whether the Actor has any himself. Here was the first Applause I ever receiv'd, which you may be sure, made my Heart leap with a higher Joy, than may be necessary to describe; and yet my Transport was not then half so high, as at what *Goodman* (who had now left the Stage) said of me, the next Day, in my hearing. *Goodman* often came to a Rehearsal for Amusement, and having late out the *Orphan*, the Day before; in a Conversation with some of the principal Actors, enquir'd what new young Fellow that was, whom he had seen in the Chaplain? Upon which, *Monfort* reply'd, *That's he, behind you.* *Goodman* then turning about, look'd earnestly at me, and, after some Pause, clapping me on the Shoulder, rejoind, *If he does not make a good Actor, I'll be d—n'd!* The Surprize of being commended, by one who had been himself so eminent, on the Stage, and in so positive a manner, was more than I could support; in a Word, it almost took away my Breath, and (laugh, if you please) fairly drew Tears from my Eyes! And tho' it may be as ridiculous, as incredible, to tell you what a full Vanity, and Content, at that time possess'd me, I will still make it a Question, whether *Alexander* himself, or *Charles the Twelfth* of *Sweden*, when at the Head of their first victorious Armies, could feel a greater

Transport, in their Bosoms, than I did then in mine, when but in the Rear of this Troop of Comedians. You see, to what low Particulars I am forced to descend, to give you a true Resemblance of the early and lively Follies of my Mind. Let me give you another Instance, of my Discretion, more desperate, than that, of preferring the Stage, to any other Views of Life. One might think, that the Madness of breaking, from the Advice, and Care of Parents, to turn Player, could not easily be exceeded; But what think you, Sir, of — Matrimony? which, before I was Two-and-twenty, I actually committed, when I had but Twenty Pounds a Year, which my Father had assur'd to me, and Twenty Shillings a Week from my Theatrical Labours, to maintain, as I then thought, the happiest young Couple, that ever took a Leap in the Dark! If after this, to complete my Fortune, I turn'd Poet too, this last Folly, indeed, had something a better Excuse.—Necessity: Had it never been my Lot to have come on the Stage, 'tis probable, I might never have been inclin'd, or reduc'd to have wrote for it: But having once expos'd my Person there, I thought it could be no additional Dishonour to let my Parts, whatever they were, take their Fortune along with it.—But, to return to the Progress I made as an Actor.

Queen Mary having commanded the *Double Dealer* to be acted, *Kynaston* happen'd to be so ill, that he could not hope to be able next
Day



MARIE REINE DE
LA GRANDE-BRETAGNE



G. Kneller Durt Pinxt 1703.

J. Faber fecit 1733.

William



Congreve. Esq^r

Day to perform his Part of the Lord *Touchwood*. In this Exigence, the Author, Mr. *Congreve*, advis'd that it might be given to me, if at so short a Warning I would undertake it. The Flattery of being thus distinguish'd by so celebrated an Author, and the Honour to act before a Queen, you may be sure, made me blind to whatever Difficulties might attend it. I accepted the Part, and was ready in it before I slept; next Day the Queen was present at the Play, and was receiv'd with a new Prologue from the Author, spoken by Mrs. *Barry*, humbly acknowledging the great Honour done to the Stage, and to his Play in particular: Two Lines of it, which tho' I have not since read, I still remember.

*But never were in Rome, nor Athens seen,
So fair a Circle, or so bright a Queen.*

After the Play, Mr. *Congreve* made me the Compliment of saying, That I had not only answer'd, but had exceeded his Expectations, and that he would shew me he was sincere, by his saying more of me to the Masters.—He was as good as his Word, and the next Pay-day, I found my Sallary, of fifteen, was then advanc'd to twenty Shillings a Week. But alas! this favourable Opinion of Mr. *Congreve*, made no farther Impression upon the Judgment of my good Masters; it only serv'd to heighten my own Vanity; but could not recommend me to any new Trials of my Capacity; not a Step farther could I get, 'till the Com-

pany was again divided; when the Defertion of the best Actors left a clear Stage, for younger Champions to mount, and shew their best Pretensions to Favour. But it is now time to enter upon those Facts, that immediately preceded this remarkable Revolution of the Theatre.

You have seen how complete a Set of Actors were under the Government of the united Patents in 1690; if their Gains were not extraordinary, what shall we impute it to, but some extraordinary ill Management? I was then too young to be in their Secrets, and therefore can only observe upon what I saw, and have since thought visibly wrong.

Though the Success of the *Prophetess*, and *King Arthur* (two dramatick Operas, in which the Patentees had embark'd all their Hopes) was, in Appearance, very great, yet their whole Receipts did not so far balance their Expence, as to keep them out of a large Debt, which it was publickly known was, about this time, contracted, and which found Work for the Court of Chancery for about twenty Years following, till one side of the Cause grew weary. But this was not all that was wrong; every Branch of the Theatrical Trade had been sacrific'd, to the necessary fitting out those tall Ships of Burthen, that were to bring home the *Indies*. Plays of course were neglected, Actors held cheap, and slightly dress'd, while Singers, and Dancers were better paid, and embroider'd. These Measures, of course, created

ated Murmurings, on one side, and Ill-humour and Contempt on the other. When it became necessary therefore to lessen the Charge, a Resolution was taken to begin with the Salaries of the Actors; and what seem'd to make this Resolution more necessary at this time, was the Loss of *Nokes*, *Monfort*, and *Leigh*, who all dy'd about the same Year: No wonder then, if when these great Pillars were at once remov'd, the Building grew weaker, and the Audiences very much abated. Now in this Distress, what more natural Remedy could be found, than to incite and encourage (tho' with some Hazard) the Industry of the surviving Actors? But the Patentees, it seems, thought the surer way was to bring down their Pay, in proportion to the Fall of their Audiences. To make this Project more feasible, they propos'd to begin at the Head of them, rightly judging, that if the Principals acquiesc'd, their Inferiors would murmur in vain. To bring this about with a better Grace, they under Pretence of bringing younger Actors forwards, order'd several of *Betterton's*, and *Mrs. Barry's* chief Parts to be given to young *Powel*, and *Mrs. Bracegirdle*. In this they committed two palpable Errors; for while the best Actors are in Health, and still on the Stage, the Publick is always apt to be out of humour, when those of a lower Class pretend to stand in their Places; or admitting, at this time, they might have been accepted, this Project might very probably have lessen'd, but could not possibly

possibly mend an Audience; and was a sure Loss of that Time, in studying, which might have been better employ'd in giving the Auditor Variety, the only Temptation to a pall'd Appetite; and Variety is only to be given by Industry: But Industry will always be lame, when the Actor has Reason to be discontented. This the Patentees did not consider, or pretended not to value, while they thought their Power secure, and uncontrollable: But farther, their first Project did not succeed; for tho' the giddy Head of *Powel*, accepted the Parts of *Betterton*; Mrs. *Bracegirdle* had a different way of thinking, and desir'd to be excus'd, from those of Mrs. *Barry*; her good Sense was not to be misled by the insidious Favour of the Patentees; she knew the Stage was wide enough for her Success, without entering into any such rash, and invidious Competition, with Mrs. *Barry*, and therefore wholly refus'd acting any Part that properly belong'd to her. But this Proceeding, however, was Warning enough to make *Betterton* be upon his Guard, and to alarm others, with Apprehensions of their own Safety, from the Design that was laid against him: *Betterton*, upon this, drew into his Party most of the valuable Actors, who, to secure their Unity, enter'd with him into a sort of Association, to stand, or fall together. All this the Patentees for some time slighted, but when Matters drew towards a Crisis, they found it adviseable to take the same Measures, and accordingly

cordingly open'd an Association on their part; both which were severally sign'd, as the Interest or Inclination of either Side led them.

During these Contentions, which the impolitick Patentees had rais'd against themselves (not only by this I have mentioned, but by many other Grievances, which my Memory retains not) the Actors offer'd a Treaty of Peace; but their Masters imagining no Consequence could shake the Right of their Authority, refus'd all Terms of Accommodation. In the mean time this Dissention was so prejudicial to their daily Affairs, that I remember it was allow'd by both Parties, that before *Christmas*, the Patent had lost the getting of at least a thousand Pounds by it.

My having been a Witness of this unnecessary Rupture, was of great use to me, when many Years after, I came to be a Manager myself. I laid it down as a settled Maxim, that no Company could flourish while the chief Actors, and the Undertakers were at variance. I therefore made it a Point, while it was possible, upon tolerable Terms, to keep the valuable Actors in humour with their Station; and tho' I was as jealous of their Encroachments, as any of my Co-partners could be, I always guarded against the least Warmth, in my Expostulations with them; not but at the same time they might see, I was perhaps more determin'd in the Question, than those that gave a loose to their Resentment, and when they were cool, were as apt to recede. I do
not

not remember that ever I made a Promise to any, that I did not keep, and therefore was cautious how I made them. This Coldness, tho' it might not please, at least left them nothing to reproach me with; and if Temper, and fair Words could prevent a Disobligation, I was sure never to give Offence or receive it. But as I was but one of three, I could not oblige others to observe the same Conduct. However, by this means, I kept many an unreasonable Discontent, from breaking out, and both Sides found their Account in it.

How a contemptuous and overbearing manner of treating Actors had like to have ruin'd us, in our early Prosperity, shall be shewn in its Place: If future Managers should chance to think my way right, I suppose they will follow it; if not, when they find what happen'd to the Patentees (who chose to disagree with their People) perhaps they may think better of it.

The Patentees then, who by their united Powers, had made a Monopoly of the Stage, and consequently presum'd they might impose what Conditions they pleas'd upon their People, did not consider, that they were all this while endeavouring to enslave a Set of Actors, whom the Publick (more arbitrary than themselves) were inclined to support; nor did they reflect, that the Spectator naturally wish'd, that the Actor, who gave him Delight, might enjoy the Profits arising from his Labour, without regard of what pretended Damage, or Injustice might fall upon his Owners, whose per-



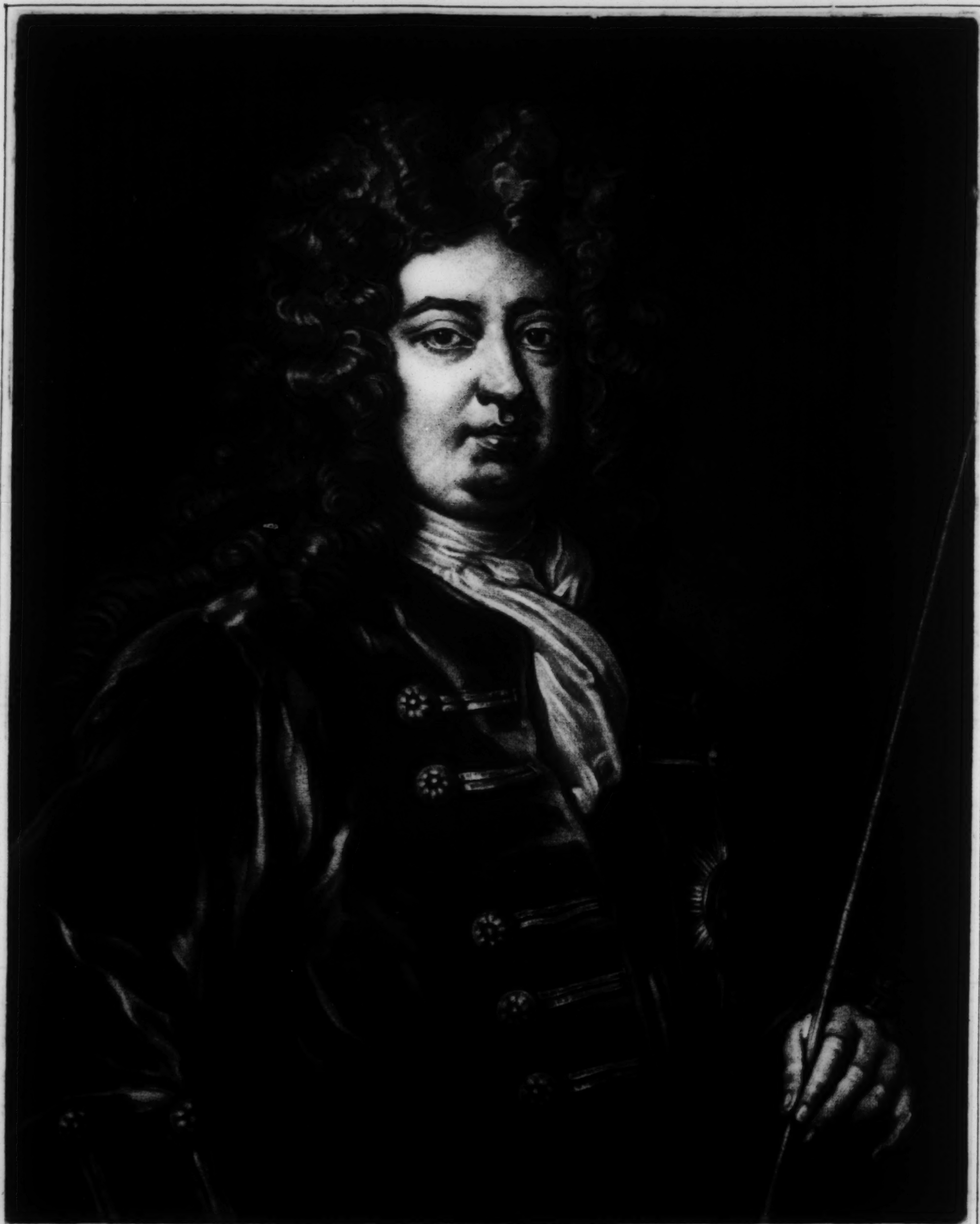
Serenissima Maria D.G. Angl: Scot: Franc: & Hiber: Regina

I. Vindervaar! Pinxit.

W:^m Faithorne fecit.

Cum Privilegio Regis. 1698.

E. Cooper Excudit



G. Kneller Bar. Pinx.

J. Faber fecit 1734

Charles Sackville



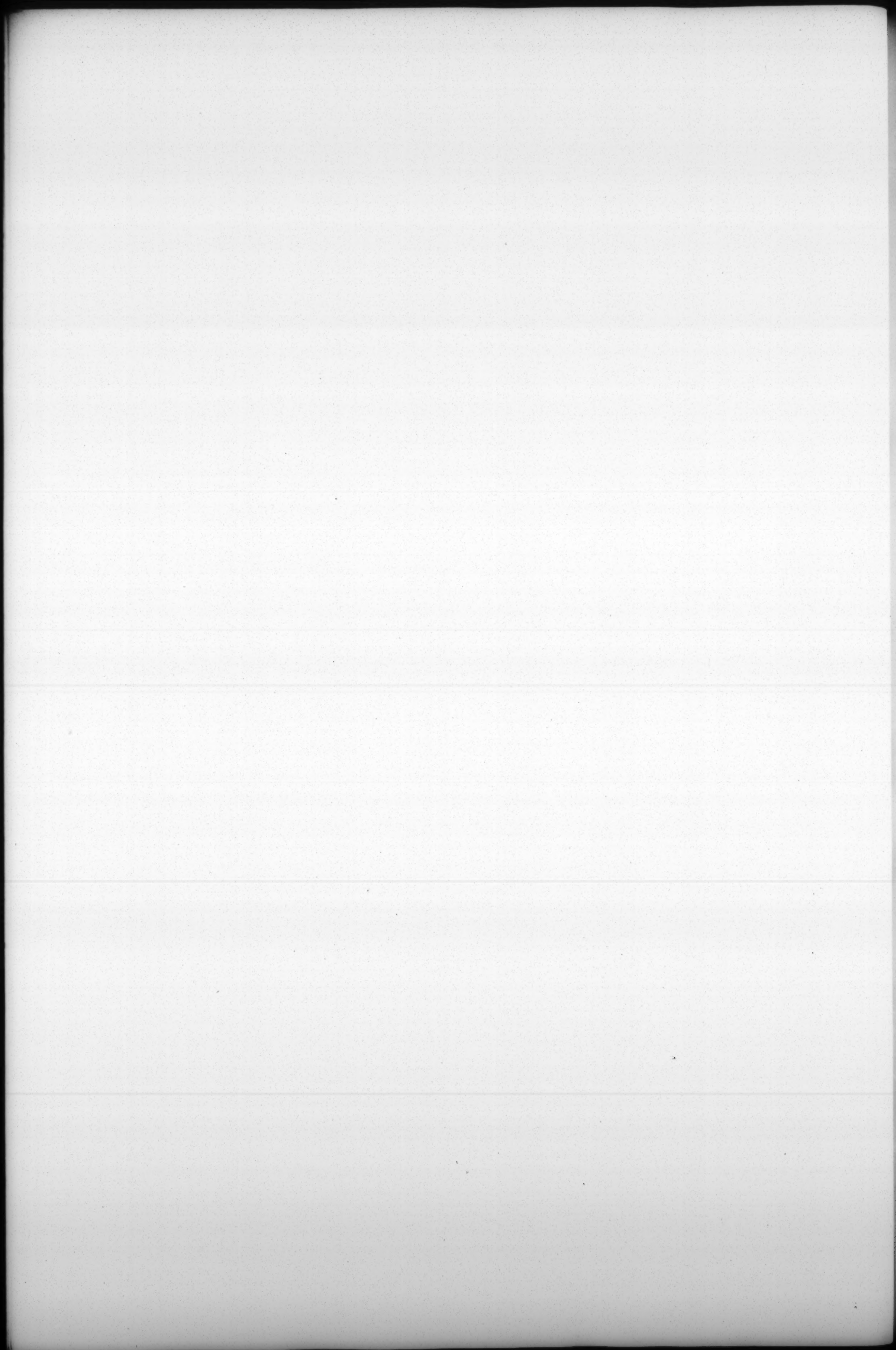
Earl of Dorset &c. &c.

sonal Merit the Publick was not so well acquainted with. From this Consideration, then, several Persons of the highest Distinction espous'd their Cause, and sometimes, in the Circle, entertain'd the King with the State of the Theatre. At length their Grievances were laid before the Earl of *Dorset*, then Lord Chamberlain, who took the most effectual Method for their Relief. The Learned of the Law were advis'd with, and they gave their Opinion, that no Patent for acting Plays, &c. could tie up the Hands of a succeeding Prince, from granting the like Authority, where it might be thought proper to trust it. But while this Affair was in Agitation, Queen *Mary* dy'd, which of course occasion'd a Cessation of all publick Diversions. In this melancholy Interim, *Betterton*, and his Adherents had more Leisure to solicit their Redress; and the Patentees now finding, that the Party against them was gathering Strength, were reduced to make sure of as good a Company, as the Leavings of *Betterton's* Interest could form; and these, you may be sure, would not lose this Occasion of setting a Price upon their Merit, equal to their own Opinion of it, which was but just double to what they had before. *Powel*, and *Verbruggen*, who had then but forty Shillings a Week, were now rais'd each of them to four Pounds, and others in Proportion: As for my self, I was then too insignificant to be taken into their Councils, and consequently stood among those of little Importance, like Cattle in

a Market, to be sold to the first Bidder. But the Patentees seeming in the greater Distress for Actors, condescended to purchase me. Thus, without any farther Merit, than that of being a scarce Commodity, I was advanc'd to thirty Shillings a Week: Yet our Company was so far from being full, that our Commanders were forced to beat up for Volunteers, in several distant Counties; it was this Occasion that first brought *Johnson* and *Bullock* to the Service of the Theatre-Royal.

Forces being thus raised, and the War declared on both Sides, *Betterton* and his Chiefs had the Honour of an Audience of the King, who consider'd them as the only Subjects, whom he had not yet deliver'd from arbitrary Power; and graciously dismiss'd them, with an Assurance of Relief, and Support.—Accordingly a select Number of them were empower'd by his Royal Licence, to act in a separate Theatre, for themselves. This great Point being obtain'd, many People of Quality came into a voluntary Subscription of twenty; and some of forty Guineas a-piece, for erecting a Theatre within the Walls of the Tennis-Court, in *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields*. But as it required Time to fit it up, it gave the Patentees more Leisure to muster their Forces, who notwithstanding were not able to take the Field till the *Easter-Monday* in *April* following. Their first Attempt was a reviv'd Play, call'd *Abdelazar*, or the *Moor's Revenge*, poorly written, by *Mrs. Behn*. The House was very full, but whether

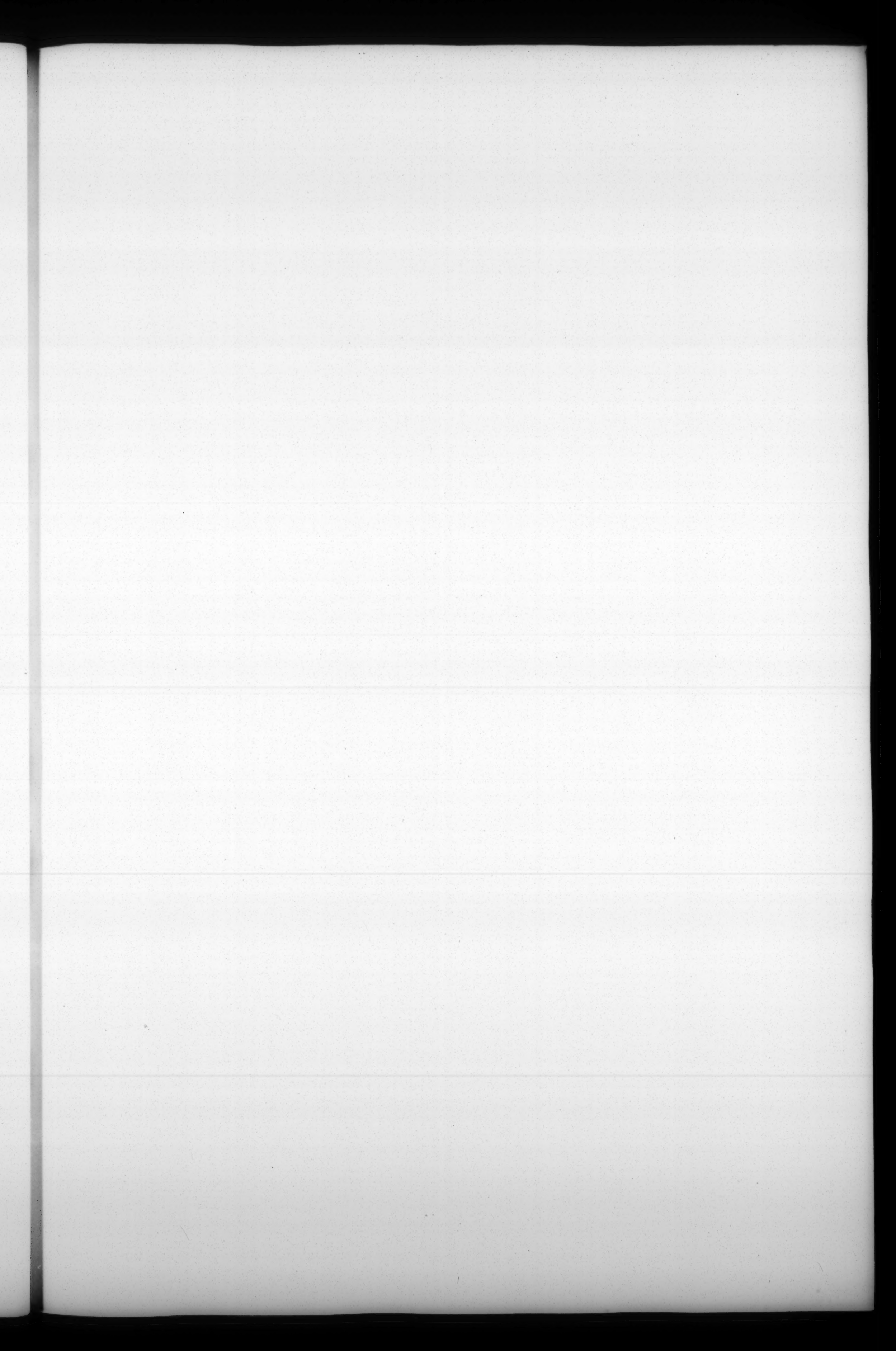




whether it was the Play, or the Actors, that were not approved, the next Day's Audience sunk to nothing. However, we were assured, that let the Audiences be never so low, our Masters would make good all Deficiencies, and so indeed they did, 'till towards the End of the Season, when Dues to Ballance came too thick upon 'em. But that I may go gradually on with my own Fortune, I must take this Occasion to let you know, by the following Circumstance, how very low my Capacity, as an Actor, was then rated: It was thought necessary, at our Opening, that the Town should be address'd in a new Prologue; but to our great Distress, among several, that were offer'd, not one was judg'd fit to be spoken. This I thought a faourable Occasion, to do myself some remarkable Service, if I should have the good Fortune, to produce one that might be accepted. The next (memorable) Day my Muse brought forth her first Fruit that was ever made publick; how good, or bad imports not; my Prologue was accepted, and resolv'd on to be spoken. This Point being gain'd, I began to stand upon Terms, you will say, not unreasonable; which were, that if I might speak it myself, I would expect no farther Reward for my Labour: This was judg'd as bad as having no Prologue at all! You may imagine how hard I thought it, that they durst not trust my poor poetical Brat, to my own Care. But since I found it was to be given into other Hands, I insisted that two Guineas should

should be the Price of my parting with it; which with a Sigh I received, and *Powel* spoke the Prologue: But every Line, that was applauded, went sorely to my Heart, when I reflected, that the same Praise might have been given to my own speaking; nor could the Success of the Author compensate the Distress of the Actor. However, in the End, it serv'd, in some sort, to mend our People's Opinion of me; and whatever the Criticks might think of it, one of the Patentees (who, it is true, knew no Difference between *Dryden* and *D'ursey*) said, upon the Success of it, that insooth! I was an ingenious young Man. This sober Compliment (tho' I could have no Reason to be vain upon it) I thought was a fair Promise to my being in favour. But to Matters of more Moment: Now let us reconnoitre the Enemy.

After we had stolen some few Days March upon them, the Forces of *Betterton* came up with us in terrible Order: In about three Weeks following, the new Theatre was open'd against us, with a veteran Company, and a new Train of Artillery; or in plainer *English*, the old Actors, in *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields* began, with a new Comedy of Mr. *Congreve's*, call'd *Love for Love*; which ran on with such extraordinary Success, that they had seldom occasion to act any other Play, 'till the End of the Season. This valuable Play had a narrow Escape, from falling into the Hands of the Patentees; for before the Division of the Company, it had been read, and accepted of at the Theatre-





G. Kneller pinxit

From the Collection of the late Earl of Oxford.

Impensis J. & L. Knapton Sculpsit. 1743

J. Richardson sculpit. 1743

Theatre-Royal: But while the Articles of Agreement for it were preparing, the Rupture, in the Theatrical State, was so far advanced, that the Author took time to pause, before he sign'd them; when finding that all Hopes of Accommodation were impracticable, he thought it adviseable to let it take its Fortune, with those Actors for whom he had first intended the Parts.

Mr. *Congreve* was then in such high Reputation, as an Author, that besides his Profits, from this Play, they offered him a whole Share with them, which he accepted; in Consideration of which he obliged himself, if his Health permitted, to give them one new Play every Year. *Dryden*, in King *Charles's* Time, had the same Share with the King's Company; but he bound himself to give them two Plays every Season. This you may imagine he could not hold long, and I am apt to think, he might have serv'd them better, with one in a Year, not so hastily written. Mr. *Congreve*, whatever Impediment he met with, was three Years before, in pursuance to his Agreement, he produced the *Mourning Bride*; and if I mistake not, the Interval had been much the same, when he gave them the *Way of the World*. But it came out the stronger, for the Time it cost him, and to their better support, when they sorely wanted it: For though they went on with Success for a Year or two, and even, when their Affairs were declining, stood in much higher Estimation of the Publick, than

M

their

their Opponents; yet, in the End, both Sides were great Sufferers by their Separation; the natural Consequence of two Houses, which I have already mention'd in a former Chapter.

The first Error this new Colony of Actors fell into, was their inconsiderately parting with *Williams*, and Mrs. *Monfort*, upon a too nice (not to say severe) Punctilio; in not allowing them to be equal Sharers with the rest; which, before they had acted one Play, occasioned their Return to the Service of the Patentees. As I have called this an Error, I ought to give my Reasons for it. Though the Industry of *Williams* was not equal to his Capacity; for he lov'd his Bottle better than his Business; and though Mrs. *Monfort* was only excellent in Comedy, yet their Merit was too great almost on any Scruples, to be added to the Enemy; and at worst, they were certainly much more above those they would have ranked them with, than they could possibly be under those, they were not admitted to be equal to. Of this Fact there is a poetical Record, in the Prologue to *Love for Love*, where the Author speaking of the, then, happy State of the Stage, observes, that if, in Paradise, when two only were there, they both fell; the Surprise was less, if from so numerous a Body as theirs, there had been any Deserters.

Abate the Wonder, and the Fault forgive,
If, in our larger Family, we grieve
One falling Adam, and one tempted Eve.

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 These

These Lines alluded to the Revolt of the Persons above mention'd.

Notwithstanding the Acquisition of these two Actors, who were of more Importance, than any of those, to whose Assistance they came, the Affairs of the Patentees were still, in a very creeping Condition; they were now, too late, convinced of their Error, in having provok'd their People to this Civil War of the Theatre! quite changed, and dismal, now, was the Prospect before them! their Houses thin, and the Town crowding into a new one! Actors at double Sallaries, and not half the usual Audiences, to pay them! And all this brought upon them, by those, whom their full Security had condemn'd, and who were now in a fair way of making their Fortunes, upon the ruined Interest of their Oppressors.

Here, tho' at this time, my Fortune depended on the Success of the Patentees, I cannot help, in regard to Truth, remembering the rude, and riotous Havock we made of all the late dramatic Honours of the Theatre! all became at once the Spoil of Ignorance, and Self-conceit! *Shakespear* was defac'd, and tortured in every signal Character——*Hamlet*, and *Othello*, lost in one Hour all their good Sense, their Dignity, and Fame. *Brutus* and *Cassius* became noisy Blusterers, with bold unmeaning Eyes, mistaken Sentiments, and turgid Elocution! Nothing, sure, could more painfully regret a judicious Spectator, than to see, at our first setting out, with what rude

Confidence, those Habits, which actors of real Merit had left behind them, were worn by giddy Pretenders that so vulgarly disgraced them! Not young Lawyers in hir'd Robes, and Plumes, at a Masquerade, could be less, what they would seem, or more awkwardly personate the Characters they belong'd to. If, in all these Acts of wanton Waste, these Insults upon injur'd Nature, you observe, I have not yet charged one of them upon myself; it is not from an imaginary Vanity, that I could have avoided them; but that I was rather safe, by being too low, at that time, to be admitted even to my Chance of falling into the same eminent Errors: So that as none of those great Parts ever fell to my Share, I could not be accountable for the Execution of them: Nor indeed could I get one good Part of any kind, 'till many Months after; unless it were of that sort, which no body else car'd for, or would venture to expose themselves in. The first unintended Favour, therefore, of a Part of any Value, Necessity threw upon me, on the following Occasion.

As it has been always judg'd their natural Interest, where there are two Theatres, to do one another as much Mischief as they can; you may imagine it could not be long, before this hostile Policy shew'd itself, in Action. It happen'd, upon our having Information on a *Saturday* Morning, that the *Tuesday* after, *Hamlet* was intended to be acted at the other House, where it had not yet been seen; our merry managing

managing Actors, (for they were now in a manner left to govern themselves) resolv'd, at any rate to steal a March upon the Enemy, and take Possession of the same Play the Day before them: Accordingly, *Hamlet* was given out that Night, to be acted with us on *Monday*. The Notice of this sudden Enterprize, soon reach'd the other House, who, in my Opinion too much regarded it; for they shorten'd their first Orders, and resolv'd that *Hamlet* should to *Hamlet* be oppos'd, on the same Day; whereas, had they given notice in their Bills, that the same Play would have been acted by them the Day after, the Town would have been in no Doubt, which House they should have reserv'd themselves for; ours must certainly have been empty, and theirs, with more Honour, have been crowded: Experience, many Years after, in like Cases, has convinced me, that this would have been the more laudable Conduct. But be that as it may; when, in their *Monday's* Bills, it was seen that *Hamlet* was up against us, our Consternation was terrible, to find that so hopeful a Project was frustrated. In this Distress, *Powel*, who was our commanding Officer, and whose enterprising Head wanted nothing but Skill to carry him through the most desperate Attempts; for, like others of his Cast, he had murder'd many a Hero, only to get into his Cloaths. This *Powel*, I say, immediately called a Council of War; where the Question was Whether he should fairly face the Enemy, or

make a Retreat, to some other Play of more probable Safety? It was soon resolved that to act *Hamlet* against *Hamlet*, would be certainly throwing away the Play, and disgracing themselves to little or no Audience; to conclude, *Powel*, who was vain enough to envy *Betterton*, as his Rival, propos'd to change Plays with them, and that as they had given out the *Old Batchelor*, and had chang'd it for *Hamlet*, against us; we should give up our *Hamlet*, and turn the *Old Batchelor* upon them. This Motion was agreed to, *Nemine contradicente*; but, upon Enquiry, it was found, that there were not two Persons among them, who had ever acted, in that Play: But that Objection, it seems, (though all the Parts were to be study'd in six Hours) was soon got over; *Powel* had an Equivalent, *in petto*, that would balance any Deficiency on that Score; which was, that he would play the *Old Batchelor* himself, and mimick *Betterton* throughout the whole Part. This happy Thought was approv'd with Delight and Applause, as whatever can be suppos'd to ridicule Merit, generally gives joy to those that want it: Accordingly, the Bills were chang'd, and at the Bottom insert'd,

The Part of the Old Batchelor, to be perform'd in Imitation of the Original.

Printed Books of the Play were sent for in haste, and every Actor had one, to pick out of it the Part he had chosen: Thus, while they were each of them chewing the Morfel, they had

had most mind to, some one happening to cast his Eye over the *Dramatis Personæ*, found that the main Matter was still forgot, that no body had yet been thought of for the Part of Alderman *Fondlewife*. Here we were all a-ground agen! nor was it to be conceiv'd who could make the least tolerable Shift with it, This Character had been so admirably acted by *Dogget*, that though it is only seen in the Fourth Act, it may be no Dispraise to the Play, to say, it probably ow'd the greatest Part of its Success to his Performance. But, as the Case was now desperate, any Resource was better than none. Somebody must swallow the bitter Pill, or the Play must die. At last it was recollected, that I had been heard to say in my wild way of talking, what a vast mind I had to play *Nykin*, by which Name the Character was more frequently call'd. Notwithstanding they were thus distress'd about the Disposal of this Part, most of them shook their Heads, at my being mention'd for it; yet *Powel*, who was resolv'd, at all Hazards, to fall upon *Betterton*, and having no concern for what might become of any one that serv'd his Ends or Purpose, order'd me to be sent for; and, as he naturally lov'd to set other People wrong, honestly said, before I came, *If the Fool has a mind to blow himself up, at once, let us ev'n give him a clear Stage for it.* Accordingly, the Part was put into my Hands, between Eleven and Twelve that Morning, which I durst not refuse, because others were as much straitned in time,

for Study, as myself. But I had this casual Advantage of most of them; that having so constantly observ'd *Dogget's* Performance, I wanted but little Trouble, to make me perfect in the Words; so that when it came to my turn to rehearse, while others read their Parts, from their Books, I had put mine in my Pocket, and went thro' the first Scene without it; and though I was more abash'd to rehearse so remarkable a Part before the Actors (which is natural to most young People) than to act before an Audience, yet some of the better-natur'd encouraged me so far, as to say, they did not think I should make an ill Figure in it: To conclude, the Curiosity to see *Betterton* mimick'd, drew us a pretty good Audience, and *Powel*, (as far as Applause is a Proof of it) was allow'd to have burlesqu'd him very well. As I have question'd the certain Value of Applause, I hope I may venture, with less Vanity, to say how particular a Share I had of it, in the same Play. At my first Appearance, one might have imagin'd, by the various Murmurs of the Audience, that they were in doubt whether *Dogget* himself were not return'd, or that they could not conceive what strange Face it could be, that so nearly resembled him; for I had laid the Tint of forty Years, more than my real Age, upon my Features, and, to the most minute placing of an Hair, was dress'd exactly like him: When I spoke, the Surprise was still greater, as if I had not only borrow'd his Cloaths, but his Voice

Voice too. But tho' that was the least difficult Part of him, to be imitated, they seem'd to allow, I had so much of him, in every other Requisite, that my Applause was, perhaps, more than proportionable: For, whether I had done so much, where so little was expected, or that the Generosity of my Hearers were more than usually zealous, upon so unexpected an Occasion, or from what other Motive such Favour might be pour'd upon me I cannot say; but, in plain and honest Truth, upon my going off from the first Scene, a much better Actor, might have been proud of the Applause, that followed me; after one loud *Plaudit* was ended, and sunk into a general Whisper, that seem'd still to continue their private Approbation, it reviv'd to a second, and again to a third, still louder than the former. If, to all this, I add, that *Dogget* himself was, in the Pit, at the same, it would be too rank Affectation, if I should not confess, that, to see him there a Witness of my Reception, was, to me, as consummate a Triumph, as the Heart of Vanity could be indulg'd with. But whatever Vanity I might set upon myself, from this unexpected Success, I found that was no Rule to other People's Judgment of me. There were few or no Parts, of the same kind, to be had; nor could they conceive, from what I had done in this, what other sort of Characters I could be fit for. If I solicited for any thing of a different Nature, I was answered, *That was not in my Way.* And what was

in my Way, it seems, was not, as yet, resolv'd upon. And though I reply'd, *That I thought any thing, naturally written, ought to be in every one's way that pretended to be an Actor*; this was looked upon as a vain, impracticable Conceit of my own. Yet it is a Conceit, that, in forty Years farther Experience, I have not yet given up; I still think, that a Painter, who can draw but one sort of Object, or an Actor that shines, but in one Light, can neither of them boast of that ample Genius, which is necessary to form a thorough Master of his Art: For tho' Genius may have a particular Inclination, yet a good History-Painter, or a good Actor, will, without being at a loss, give you, upon Demand, a proper Likeness of whatever Nature produces. If he cannot do this, he is only an Actor, as the Shoemaker was allow'd a limited Judge of *Apelles's* Painting, but *not beyond his Last*. Now, tho' to do any one thing well, may have more Merit, than we often meet with; and may be enough, to procure a Man the Name of a good Actor, from the Publick; yet, in my Opinion, it is but still the Name, without the Substance. If his Talent is in such narrow Bounds, that he dares not step out of them, to look upon the Singularities of Mankind, and cannot catch them, in whatever Form they present themselves; if he is not Master of the *Quicquid agunt homines, &c.* in any Shape, Human Nature is fit to be seen in; if he cannot change himself into several distinct Persons, so as to vary his

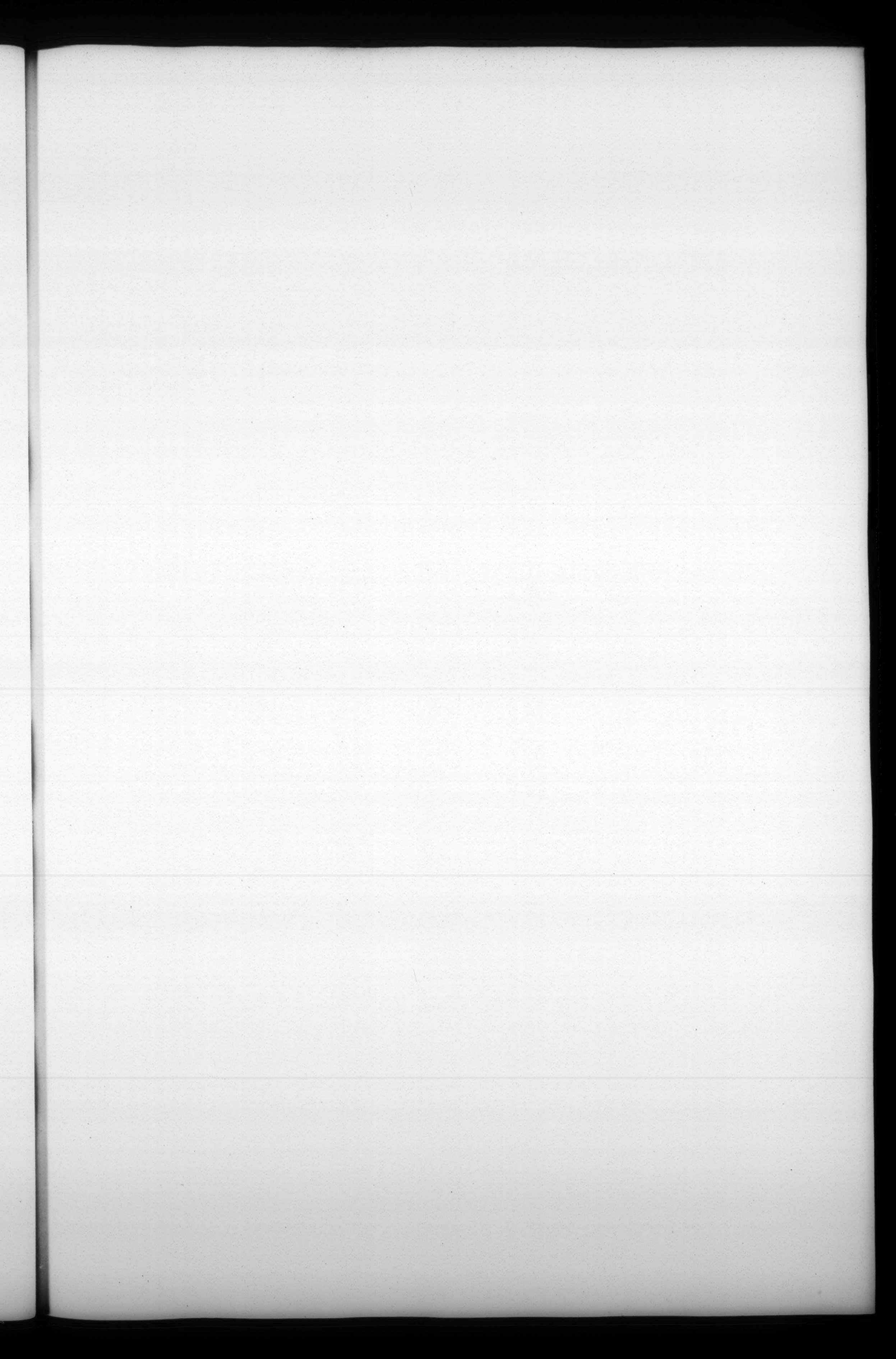
whole Tone of Voice, his Motion, his Look, and Gesture, whether in high, or lower Life, and, at the same time, keep close to those Variations, without leaving the Character they singly belong to; if his best Skill falls short of this Capacity, what Pretence have we to call him a complete Master of his Art? And tho' I do not insist, that he ought always to shew himself, in these various Lights, yet, before we compliment him with that Title, he ought, at least, by some few Proofs, to let us see, that he has them all, in his Power. If I am ask'd, who, ever, arriv'd at this imaginary Excellence, I confess, the Instances are very few; but I will venture to name *Monfort*, as one of them, whose Theatrical Character I have given, in my last Chapter: For, in his Youth, he had acted Low Humour, with great Success, even down to *Tallboy* in the *Jovial Crew*; and when he was in great Esteem, as a Tragedian, he was, in Comedy, the most complete Gentleman that I ever saw upon the Stage. Let me add too, that *Betterton*, in his declining Age, was as eminent in Sir *John Falstaff*, as in the Vigour of it, in his *Othello*.

While I thus measure the Value of an Actor, by the Variety of Shapes he is able to throw himself into, you may naturally suspect, that I am all this while, leading my own Theatrical Character into your Favour: Why, really, to speak as an honest Man, I cannot wholly deny it: But in this, I shall endeavour

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to be no farther partial to myself, than known Facts will make me; from the good, or bad Evidence of which, your better Judgment will condemn, or acquit me. And to shew you, that I will conceal no Truth, that is against me, I frankly own, that had I been always left, to my own Choice of Characters, I am doubtful whether I might ever have deserv'd an equal Share of that Estimation, which the Publick seem'd to have held me in: Nor am I sure, that it was not Vanity in me, often to have suspected, that I was kept out of the Parts, I had most mind to, by the Jealousy, or Prejudice of my Contemporaries; some Instances of which, I could give you, were they not too slight, to be remember'd: In the mean time, be pleas'd to observe, how slowly, in my younger Days, my Good-fortune came forward.

My early Success in the *Old Bachelor*, of which I have given so full an Account, having open'd no farther way to my Advancement, was enough, perhaps, to have made a young Fellow of more Modesty despair; but being of a Temper not easily dishearten'd, I resolv'd to leave nothing unattempted, that might shew me, in some new Rank of Distinction. Having then no other Resource, I was at last reduc'd to write a Character for myself; but as that was not finish'd till about a Year after, I could not, in the Interim, procure any one Part, that gave me the least Inclination to act it; and consequently such as I got, I perform'd





form'd with a proportionable Negligence. But this Misfortune, if it were one, you are not to wonder at; for the same Fate attended me, more, or less, to the last Days of my remaining on the Stage. What Defect in me, this may have been owing to, I have not yet had Sense enough to find out, but I soon found out as good a thing, which was, never to be mortify'd at it: Though I am afraid this seeming Philosophy was rather owing to my Inclination to Pleasure, than Business. But to my Point. The next Year I produc'd the Comedy of *Love's Last Shift*; yet the Difficulty of getting it to the Stage, was not easily surmounted; for, at that time, as little was expected from me, as an Author, as had been from my Pretensions to be an Actor. However, Mr. Southern, the Author of *Oroonoko*, having had the Patience to hear me read it, to him, happened to like it so well, that he immediately recommended it to the Patentees, and it was accordingly acted in *January 1695*. In this Play, I gave myself the Part of Sir *Novelty*, which was thought a good Portrait of the Foppery then in fashion. Here too, Mr. Southern, though he had approv'd my Play, came into the common Diffidence of me, as an Actor: For, when on the first Day of it, I was standing, myself, to prompt the *Prologue*, he took me by the Hand, and said, *Young Man! I pronounce thy Play a good one; I will answer for its Success, if thou dost not spoil it by thy own Action.* Though this might
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be a fair *Salvo*, for his favourable Judgment of the Play; yet if it were his real Opinion of me, as an Actor, I had the good Fortune to deceive him: I succeeded so well, in both, that People seem'd at a loss, which they should give the Preference to. But (now let me shew a little more Vanity, and my Apology for it, shall come after) the Compliment which my Lord *Dorset* (then Lord-Chamberlain) made me upon it, is, I own, what I had rather not suppress, *viz.* *That it was the best, First Play, that any Author in his Memory, had produc'd; and that for a young Fellow, to shew himself such an Actor, and such a Writer, in one Day, was something extraordinary.* But as this noble Lord has been celebrated for his Good-nature, I am contented, that as much of this Compliment should be suppos'd to exceed my Deserts, as may be imagin'd to have been heighten'd, by his generous Inclination to encourage a young Beginner. If this Excuse cannot soften the Vanity of telling a Truth so much, in my own Favour, I must lie, at the Mercy of my Reader. But there was a still higher Compliment pass'd upon me, which I may publish without Vanity, because it was not a design'd one, and apparently came from my Enemies, *viz.* That, to their certain Knowledge *it was not my own*: This Report is taken notice of in my Dedication to the Play. If they spoke Truth, if they knew what other Person it really belong'd to, I will, at least allow them true to their Trust; for above
forty

forty Years have since past, and they have not yet reveal'd the Secret.

The new Light, in which the Character of Sir *Novelty* had shewn me, one might have thought, were enough, to have dissipated the Doubts, of what I might now, be possibly good for. But to whatever Chance, my Ill-fortune was due; whether I had still, but little Merit, or that the Managers, if I had any, were not competent Judges of it; or whether I was not generally elbow'd, by other Actors (which I am most inclin'd to think the true Cause) when any fresh Parts were to be dispos'd of, not one Part of any consequence was I preferr'd to, 'till the Year following: Then, indeed, from Sir *John Vanbrugh's* favourable Opinion of me, I began, with others, to have a better of myself: For he not only did me Honour, as an Author, by writing his *Relapse*, as a Sequel, or Second Part, to *Love's last Shift*; but as an Actor too, by preferring me, to the chief Character in his own Play; (which from Sir *Novelty*) he had ennobled by the Style of Baron of *Foppington*. This Play (the *Relapse*) from its new, and easy Turn of Wit, had great Success, and gave me, as a Comedian, a second Flight of Reputation along with it.

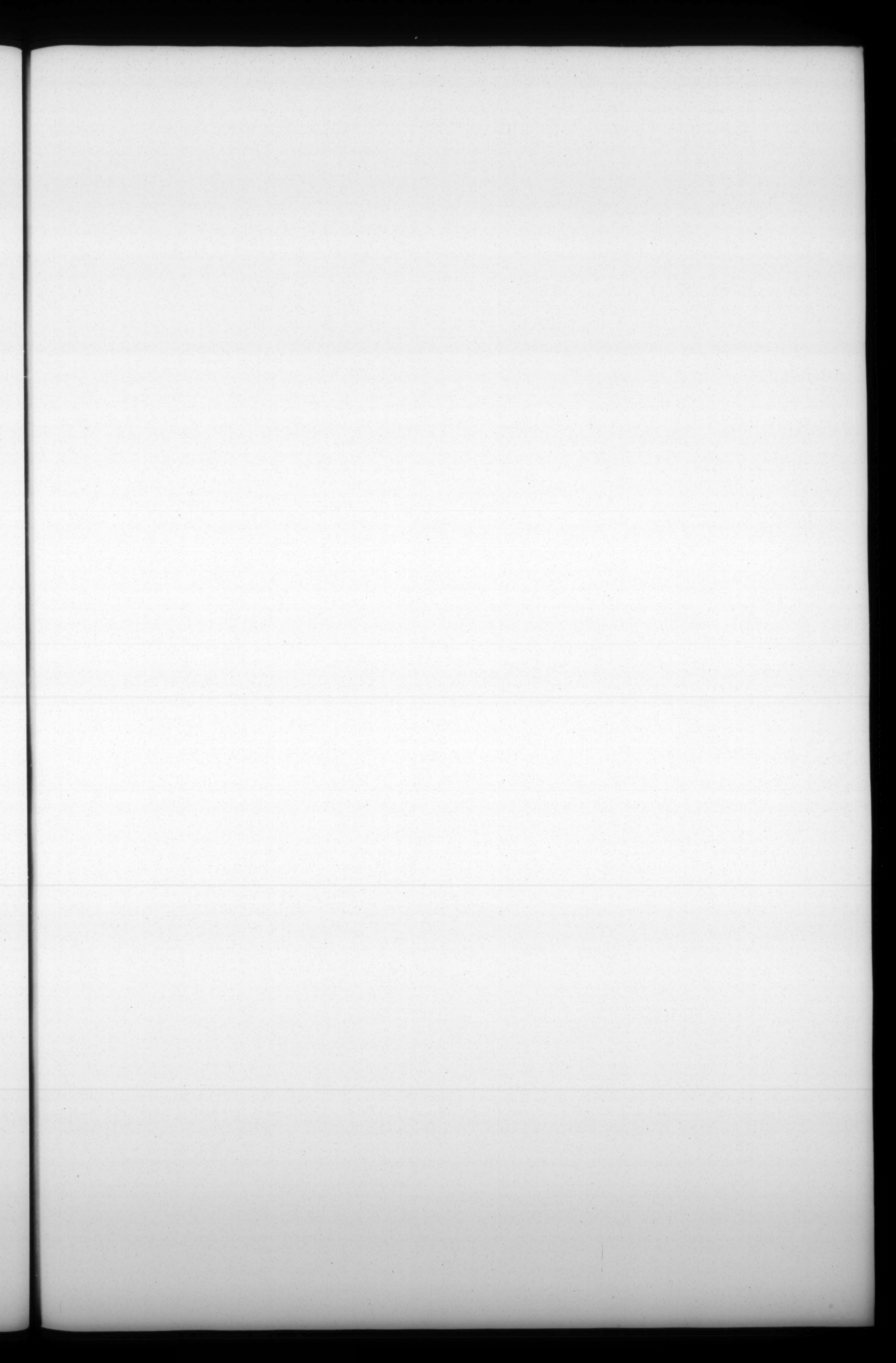
As the Matter I write must be very flat, or impertinent, to those, who have no Taste, or Concern for the Stage; and may to those, who delight in it too, be equally tedious, when I talk of no body but myself; I shall
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176 *The LIFE of*

endeavour to relieve your Patience, by a Word or two more of this Gentleman, so far as he lent his Pen to the Support of the Theatre.

Though the *Relapse* was the first Play this agreeable Author produc'd, yet it was not, it seems, the first he had written; for he had at that time, by him, (more than) all the Scenes, that were acted of the *Provok'd Wife*; but being then doubtful, whether he should ever trust them to the Stage, he thought no more of it: But after the Success of the *Relapse*, he was more strongly importun'd, than able, to refuse it to the Publick. Why the last-written Play was first acted, and for what Reason they were given to different Stages, what follows, will explain.

In his first Step into publick Life, when he was but an Ensign, and had a Heart above his Income, he happen'd somewhere, at his Winter-Quarters, upon a very slender Acquaintance with Sir *Thomas Shipwith*, to receive a particular Obligation from him, which he had not forgot at the Time I am speaking of: When Sir *Thomas's* Interest, in the Theatrical Patent (for he had a large Share in it, though he little concern'd himself in the Conduct of it) was rising but very slowly, he thought, that to give it a Lift, by a new Comedy, if it succeeded, might be the handsomest Return he could make to those his former Favours; and having observ'd, that in *Love's last Shift*, most of the Actors had acquitted themselves, beyond what was expected of them; he took a sudden





G. Kneller Bar.^o pinx.^t

J. Faber
Fecit 1722



Charles. Montagu Earl of Halifax

&c.c.c.

sudden Hint from what he lik'd, in that Play, and in less than three Months, in the beginning of *April* following, brought us the *Relapse* finish'd; but the Season being then too far advanc'd, it was not acted 'till the succeeding Winter. Upon the Success of the *Relapse*, the late Lord *Hallifax*, who was a great Favourer of *Betterton's* Company, having formerly, by way of Family-Amusement, heard the *Provok'd Wife* read to him, in its looser Sheets, engag'd Sir *John Vanbrugh* to revise it, and give it to the Theatre in *Lincoln's-Inn Fields*. This was a Request not to be refus'd to so eminent a Patron of the Muses, as the Lord *Hallifax*, who was equally a Friend and Admirer of Sir *John* himself. Nor was Sir *Thomas Skipwith*, in the least disobliged, by so reasonable a Compliance: After which, Sir *John* was agen at liberty, to repeat his Civilities to his Friend, Sir *Thomas*; and about the same time, or not long after, gave us the Comedy of *Æsop*; for his Inclination always led him to serve Sir *Thomas*. Besides, our Company, about this time, began to be look'd upon, in another Light; the late Contempt we had lain under, was now wearing off, and from the Success of two or three new Plays, our Actors, by being Originals in a few good Parts, where they had not the Disadvantage of Comparison against them, sometimes found new Favour, in those old Plays, where others had exceeded them.

Of this Good-fortune, perhaps, I had more than my Share, from the two very different, chief Characters, I had succeeded in; for I was equally approv'd in *Æsop*, as the *Lord Foppington*, allowing the Difference, to be no less, than as Wisdom, in a Person deform'd, may be less entertaining to the general Taste, than Folly and Foppery, finely dress'd: For the Character that delivers Precepts of Wisdom, is, in some sort, severe upon the Auditor, by shewing him one wiser than himself. But when Folly is his Object, he applauds himself, for being wiser than the Coxcomb he laughs at: And who is not more pleas'd with an Occasion to commend, than accuse himself?

Though, to write much, in a little time, is no Excuse for writing ill; yet Sir *John Vanbrugh's* Pen, is not to be a little admir'd, for its Spirit, Ease, and Readiness, in producing Plays so fast, upon the Neck of one another; for, notwithstanding this quick Dispatch, there is a clear and lively Simplicity in his Wit, that neither wants the Ornament of Learning, nor has the least Smell of the Lamp in it. As the Face of a fine Woman, with only her Locks loose, about her, may be then in its greatest Beauty; such were his Productions, only adorn'd by Nature. There is something so catching to the Ear, so easy to the Memory, in all he writ, that it has been observ'd, by all the Actors of my Time, that the Style of no Author whatsoever, gave their Memory
less

less trouble, than that of Sir *John Vanbrugh*; which I myself, who have been charg'd with several of his strongest Characters, can confirm by a pleasing Experience. And indeed his Wit and Humour, was so little laboured, that his most entertaining Scenes seem'd to be no more, than his common Conversation committed to Paper. Here, I confess my Judgment at a Loss, whether, in this, I give him more, or less, than his due Praise? For may it not be more laudable, to raise an Estate (whether in Wealth, or Fame) by Pains, and honest Industry, than to be born to it? Yet, if his Scenes really were, as to me they always seem'd, delightful, are they not, thus, expeditiously written, the more surprising? let the Wit, and Merit of them, then, be weigh'd by wiser Criticks, than I pretend to be: But no wonder, while his Conceptions were so full of Life, and Humour, his Muse should be sometimes too warm, to wait the slow Pace of Judgment, or to endure the Drudgery, of forming a regular Fable to them: Yet we see the *Relapse*, however imperfect, in the Conduct, by the mere Force of its agreeable Wit, ran away with the Hearts of its Hearers; while *Love's last Shift*, which (as Mr. *Congreve* justly said of it) had only in it, a great many things, that were like Wit, that in reality were not Wit; and what is still less pardonable (as I say of it myself) has a great deal of Puerility, and frothy Stage-Language in it, yet by the mere moral De-

light receiv'd from its Fable, it has been, with the other, in a continued, and equal Possession of the Stage, for more than forty Years.

A. I have already promis'd you, to refer your Judgment of me, as an Actor, rather to known Facts, than my own Opinion (which, I could not be sure, would keep clear of Self-Partiality) I must a little farther risque my being tedious, to be as good as my Word. I have elsewhere allow'd, that my want of a strong and full Voice, soon cut short my Hopes of making any valuable Figure, in Tragedy; and I have been many Years since, convinced, that whatever Opinion I might have of my own Judgment, or Capacity to amend the palpable Errors, that I saw our Tragedians, most in favour, commit; yet the Auditors, who would have been sensible of any such Amendments (could I have made them) were so very few, that my best Endeavour would have been but an unavailing Labour, or, what is yet worse, might have appeared both to our Actors, and to many Auditors, the vain Mistake of my own Self-Conceit: For so strong, so very near indispensable, is that one Article of Voice, in the forming a good Tragedian, that an Actor may want any other Qualification whatsoever and yet have a better chance for Applause, than he will ever have, with all the Skill in the World, if his Voice is not equal to it. Mistake me not; I say, for *Applause* only—but *Applause* does not always stay for, nor always follow

follow intrinsic Merit; Applause will frequently open, like a young Hound, upon a wrong Scent; and the Majority of Auditors, you know, are generally compos'd of Babblers, that are profuse of their Voices, before there is any thing on foot, that calls for them: Not but, I grant, to lead, or mislead the Many, will always stand in some Rank of a necessary Merit; yet when I say a good Tragedian, I mean one, in Opinion of whose *real* Merit, the best Judges would agree.

Having so far given up my Pretensions to the Buskin, I ought now to account for my having been, notwithstanding, so often seen, in some particular Characters in Tragedy, as *Yago*, *Wolsey*, *Syphax*, *Richard the Third*, &c. If, in any of this kind I have succeeded, perhaps it has been a Merit dearly purchas'd; for, from the Delight I seem'd to take in my performing them, half my Auditors have been persuaded, that a great Share of the Wickedness of them, must have been in my own Nature: If this is true, as true I fear (I had almost said hope) it is, I look upon it rather as a Praise, than Censure of my Performance. Aversion there is an involuntary Commendation, where we are only hated, for being like the thing, we *ought* to be like; a sort of Praise however, which few Actors besides my self could endure: Had it been equal to the usual Praise given to Virtue, my Cotemporaries would have thought themselves injur'd, if I had pretended to any Share of it: So that you see, it

has been, as much the Dislike others had to them, as Choice, that has thrown me sometimes into these Characters. But it may be farther observ'd, that in the Characters I have nam'd, where there is so much close meditated Mischief, Deceit, Pride, Insolence, or Cruelty, they cannot have the least Cast, or Profer of the Amiable in them; consequently, there can be no great Demand for that harmonious Sound, or pleasing, round Melody of Voice, which in the softer Sentiments of Love, the Wailings of distressful Virtue, or in the Throws and Swellings of Honour, and Ambition, may be needful to recommend them to our Pity, or Admiration: So that again; my want of that requisite Voice might less disqualify me for the vicious, than the virtuous Character. This too may have been a more favourable Reason for my having been chosen for them—a yet farther Consideration, that inclin'd me to them, was that they are generally better written, thicker sown, with sensible Reflections, and come by so much nearer to common Life, and Nature, than Characters of Admiration, as Vice is more the Practice of Mankind than Virtue: Nor could I sometimes help smiling, at those dainty Actors, that were too squeamish to swallow them! as if they were one Jot the better Men, for acting a good Man well, or another Man the worse, for doing equal Justice to a bad one! 'Tis not, sure, *what* we act, but *how* we act what is allotted us, that speaks our intrinsic Value! as in real Life,
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the wise Man, or the Fool, be he Prince, or Peasant, will, in either State, be equally the Fool, or the wise Man—but alas! in personated Life, this is no Rule to the Vulgar! they are apt to think all before them real, and rate the Actor according to his borrow'd Vice, or Virtue.

If then I had always too careless a Concern for false or vulgar Applause, I ought not to complain, if I have had less of it, than others of my time, or not less of it, than I desired: Yet I will venture to say, that from the common, weak Appetite of false Applause, many Actors have run into more Errors, and Absurdities, than their greatest Ignorance could otherwise have committed: If this Charge is true, it will lie chiefly upon the better Judgment of the Spectator to reform it.

But not to make too great a Merit of my avoiding this common Road to Applause, perhaps I was vain enough to think, I had more ways, than one, to come at it. That, in the Variety of Characters I acted, the Chances to win it, were the stronger on my Side—That, if the Multitude were not in a Roar, to see me, in *Cardinal Wolfey*, I could be sure of them in *Alderman Fondlewife*. If they hated me in *Jago*, in *Sir Fopling* they took me for a fine Gentleman; if they were silent at *Syphax*, no *Italian Eunuch* was more applauded than when I sung in *Sir Courthy*. If the Morals of *Æsop* were too grave for them, *Justice Shallow* was as simple, and as merry an old Rake, as

the wisest of our young ones could wish me: And though the Terror and Detestation raised by King *Richard*, might be too severe a Delight for them, yet the more gentle and modern Vanities of a Poet *Bays*, or the well-bred Vices of a Lord *Foppington*, were not at all, more than their merry Hearts, or nicer Morals could bear.

These few Instances out of fifty more I could give you, may serve to explain, what sort of Merit, I at most pretended to; which was, that I supplied, with Variety, whatever I might want of that particular Skill, wherein others went before me. How this Variety was executed (for by that only is its value to be rated) you who have so often been my Spectator, are the proper Judge; If you pronounce my Performance to have been defective, I am condemn'd by my own Evidence; if you acquit me, these Out-lines may serve for a Sketch of my Theatrical Character.





C H A P. VII.

The State of the Stage continued. The Occasion of Wilks's commencing Actor. His Success. Facts relating to his Theatrical Talent. Actors more or less esteem'd from their private Characters.

THE *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields* Company were, now in 1693, a Commonwealth, like that of *Holland*, divided from the Tyranny of *Spain*: But the Similitude goes very little farther; short was the Duration of the Theatrical Power! for tho' Success pour'd in so fast upon them, at their first Opening, that every thing seem'd to support it self; yet Experience, in a Year or two shew'd them, that they had never been worse govern'd, than when they govern'd themselves! many of them began to make their particular Interest more their Point, than that of the general: and tho' some Deference might be had to the Measures, and Advice of *Betterton*, several of them wanted to govern, in their Turn; and were often out of humour, that their Opinion was not equally regarded— But have we not seen the same Infirmary in *Senates*? The Tragedians seem'd to think their Rank as much above the Comedians, as in the Characters they severally acted; when the first were in their Finery,

Finery, the latter were impatient, at the Expence; and look'd upon it, as rather laid out, upon the real, than the fictitious Person of the Actor; nay, I have known, in our own Company, this ridiculous sort of Regret carried so far, that the Tragedian has thought himself injured, when the *Comedian* pretended to wear a fine Coat! I remember *Powel*, upon surveying my first Dress, in the *Relapse*, was out of all temper, and reproach'd our Master in very rude Terms, that he had not so good a Suit to play *Cesar Borgia* in! tho' he knew, at the same time, my Lord *Foppington* fill'd the House, when his bouncing *Borgia* would do little more than pay Fiddles, and Candles to it: And though a Character of Vanity, might be supposed more expensive in Dress, than possibly one of Ambition; yet the high Heart of this heroical Actor could not bear, that a Comedian should ever pretend to be as well dress'd as himself. Thus again on the contrary, when *Betterton* propos'd to set off a Tragedy, the Comedians were sure to murmur at the Charge of it: And the late Reputation which *Dogget* had acquired, from acting his *Ben*, in *Love for Love*, made him a more declared Male-content on such Occasions; he over-valued Comedy for its being nearer to Nature, than Tragedy; which is allow'd to say many fine things, that Nature never spoke, in the same Words; and supposing his Opinion were just, yet he should have consider'd, that the Publick had a Taste, as well as himself; which,

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in Policy, he ought to have complied with. *Dogget* however, could not, with Patience, look upon the costly Trains and Plumes of Tragedy, in which knowing himself to be useless, he thought were all a vain Extravagance: And when he found his Singularity could no longer oppose that Expence, he so obstinately adhered to his own Opinion, that he left the Society of his old Friends, and came over to us at the *Theatre-Royal*: And yet this Actor always set up for a Theatrical Patriot. This happened in the Winter following the first Division of the (only) Company. He came time enough to the *Theatre-Royal*, to act the Part of *Lory*, in the *Relapse*, an arch Valet, quite after the *French* cast, pert and familiar. But it suited so ill with *Dogget's* dry, and closely-natural Manner of acting, that upon the second Day he desired it might be disposed of to another; which the Author complying with, gave it to *Penkethman*; who tho', in other Lights, much his Inferior, yet this Part he seem'd better to become. *Dogget* was so immovable in his Opinion of whatever he thought was right, or wrong, that he could never be easy, under any kind of Theatrical Government; and was generally so warm, in pursuit of his Interest, that he often out-ran it; I remember him three times, for some Years, unemploy'd in any Theatre, from his not being able to bear, in common with others, the disagreeable Accidents, that in such Societies are unavoidable. But whatever Pretences he had form'd for

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this first deserting, from *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields*, I always thought his best Reason for it, was, that he look'd upon it as a sinking Ship; not only from the melancholy Abatement of their Profits, but likewise from the Neglect, and Disorder in their Government: He plainly saw, that their extraordinary Success at first had made them too confident of its Duration, and from thence had slacken'd their Industry--by which he observ'd, at the same time, the old House, where there was scarce any other Merit than Industry, began to flourish. And indeed they seem'd not enough to consider, that the Appetite of the Publick, like that of a fine Gentleman, could only be kept warm, by Variety; that let their Merit be never so high, yet the Taste of a Town was not always constant, nor infallible: That it was dangerous to hold their Rivals in too much Contempt; for they found, that a young industrious Company were soon a Match, for the best Actors, when too securely negligent: And negligent they certainly were, and fondly fancied, that had each of their different Schemes been follow'd, their Audiences would not so suddenly have fallen off.

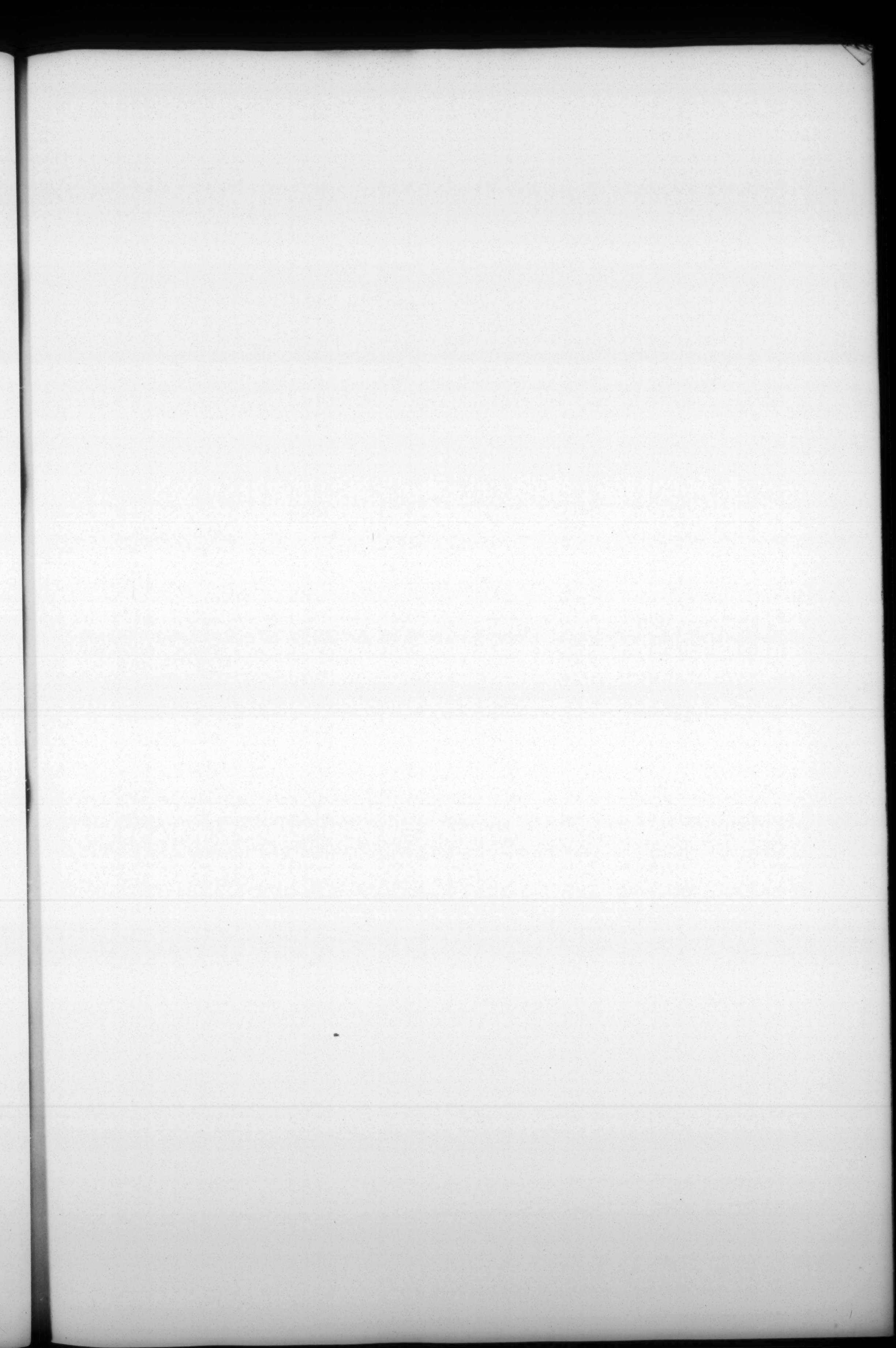
But alas! the Vanity of applauded Actors, when they are not crowded to, as they may have been, makes them naturally impute the Change to any Cause, rather than the true one, Satiety: They are mighty loath, to think a Town, once so fond of them, could ever be tired; and yet, at one time, or other, more or
less,

less, thin Houses have been the certain Fate of the most prosperous Actors, ever since I remember the Stage! But against this Evil, the provident Patentees had found out a Relief, which the new House were not yet Masters of, *viz.* Never to pay their People, when the Money did not come in; nor then neither, but in such Proportions, as suited their Conveniency. I my self was one of the many, who for six acting Weeks together, never received one Day's Pay; and for some Years after, seldom had above half our nominal Sallaries: But to the best of my Memory, the Finances of the other House, held it not above one Season more, before they were reduced to the same Expedient of making the like scanty Payments.

Such was the Distress, and Fortune of both these Companies, since their Division from the *Theatre-Royal*; either working at half Wages, or by alternate Successes, intercepting the Bread from one another's Mouths; irreconcilable Enemies, yet without Hope of Relief, from a Victory on either Side; sometimes both Parties reduced, and yet each supporting their Spirits, by seeing the other under the same Calamity.

During this State of the Stage, it was, that the lowest Expedient was made use of, to ingratiate our Company, in the Publick Favour: Our Master, who had some time practised the Law, and therefore loved a Storm, better than fair Weather (for it was his own Conduct chiefly, that had brought the Patent into these Dangers)

Dangers) took nothing so much to Heart, as that Partiality, wherewith he imagined the People of Quality had preferr'd the Actors of the other House, to those of his own: To balance this Misfortune, he was resolv'd, at least, to be well with their Domesticks, and therefore cunningly open'd the upper Gallery to them *gratis*: For before this time no Footman was ever admitted, or had presum'd to come into it, till after the fourth Act was ended: This additional Privilege (the greatest Plague that ever Play-house had to complain of) he conceived would not only incline them, to give us a good Word, in the respective Families they belong'd to, but would naturally incite them, to come all Hands aloft, in the Crack of our Applauses: And indeed it so far succeeded, that it often thunder'd from the full Gallery above, while our thin Pit, and Boxes below, were in the utmost Serenity. This riotous Privilege, so craftily given, and which from Custom, was at last ripen'd into Right, became the most disgraceful Nuisance, that ever depreciated the Theatre. How often have the most polite Audiences, in the most affecting Scenes of the best Plays, been disturb'd and insulted, by the Noise and Clamour of these savage Spectators? From the same narrow way of thinking too, were so many ordinary People, and unlick'd Cubs of Condition, admitted behind our Scenes, for Money, and sometimes without it: The Plagues and Inconveniencies of which Custom, we found so intolerable,





J. Ellps pinxt 1732.



Robert Wilks Esq.

J. Faber fecit.

*Videtisne quàm nihil ab eo Histrione nisi perfectè, nil nisi cum summa
Venustate fiat, nisi ita ut doceat, et uti omnes moveat et delectat* Cic. Epist.

Sold by J. Bowles in St. Pauls Ch. yard, & J. Bowles at Mercers Hall Cheapside. Sold by J. Faber at the Green Door in Graven Buildings Drury Lane.

tolerable, when we afterwards had the Stage in our Hands, that at the Hazard of our Lives, we were forced to get rid of them; and our only Expedient was, by refusing Money from all Persons, without Distinction, at the Stage-Door; by this means we preserved to ourselves the Right and Liberty of chusing our own Company there: And by a strict Observance of this Order, we brought what had been before debas'd into all the Licences of a Lobby, into the Decencies of a Drawing-Room.

About the distressful Time I was speaking of, in the Year 1696, *Wilks*, who now had been five Years in great Esteem on the *Dublin* Theatre, return'd to that of *Drury-Lane*; in which last he had first set out, and had continued to act some small Parts, for one Winter only. The considerable Figure which he so lately made upon the Stage in *London*, makes me imagine that a particular Account of his first commencing Actor may not be unacceptable, to the Curious; I shall, therefore, give it them, as I had it, from his own Mouth.

In King *James's* Reign he had been some time employ'd in the Secretary's Office in *Ireland* (his native Country) and remain'd in it, till after the Battle of the *Boyn*, which completed the Revolution. Upon that happy, and unexpected Deliverance, the People of *Dublin*, among the various Expressions of their Joy, had a mind to have a Play; but the Actors being dispersed, during the War, some private Persons agreed, in the best Manner they were able,



J. Kellip pinx. 1732.

J. Faber fecit.

Robert Wilks Esq.

Vide tunc quam nihil ab eo Histrione nisi perfectè, nil nisi cum summa

Constantia fiat, nisi ita ut decesset, et uti omnes morant et delectat. Cic. Epist.

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able, to give one, to the Publick, *gratis*, at the *Theatre*. The Play was *Othello*, in which *Wilks* acted the *Moor*; and the Applause he received in it, warm'd him to so strong an Inclination for the Stage, that he immediately preferr'd it to all his other Views in Life: for he quitted his Post, and with the first fair Occasion came over, to try his Fortune, in the (then only) Company of Actors in *London*. The Person, who supply'd his Post, in *Dublin*, he told me, rais'd to himself, from thence, a Fortune of fifty thousand Pounds. Here you have a much stronger Instance of an extravagant Passion for the Stage, than that, which I have elsewhere shewn in my self; I only quitted my *Hopes* of being preferr'd to the like Post, for it; but *Wilks* quitted his actual *Possession*, for the imaginary Happiness, which the Life of an Actor presented to him. And, though possibly, we might both have better'd our Fortunes, in a more honourable Station, yet whether better Fortunes might have equally gratify'd our Vanity (the universal Passion of Mankind) may admit of a Question.

Upon his being formerly received into the *Theatre-Royal* (which was in the Winter after I had been initiated) his Station there was much upon the same Class, with my own; our Parts were generally of an equal Insignificancy, not of consequence enough to give either a Preference: But *Wilks* being more impatient of his low Condition, than I was, (and, indeed, the Company was then so well stock'd with good Actors,

Actors, that there was very little hope of getting forward) laid hold of a more expeditious way for his advancement, and returned again to *Dublin*, with Mr *Ashbury*, the Patentee of that Theatre, to act in his new Company there: There went with him, at the same time, Mrs. *Butler*, whose Character I have already given, and *Estcourt*, who had not appeared on any Stage, and was yet only known as an excellent Mimick: *Wilks* having no Competitor in *Dublin*, was immediately preferr'd to whatever Parts his Inclination led him, and his early Reputation on that Stage, as soon rais'd, in him, an Ambition to shew himself on a better. And I have heard him say (in Raillery of the Vanity, which young Actors are liable to) that when the News of *Monfort's* Death came to *Ireland*, he from that time thought his Fortune was made, and took a Resolution to return a second time to *England*, with the first Opportunity; but as his Engagements to the Stage, where he was, were too strong to be suddenly broke from, he return'd not to the *Theatre-Royal*, 'till the Year 1696.

Upon his first Arrival, *Powel*, who was now in Possession of all the chief Parts of *Monfort*, and the only Actor that stood in *Wilks's* way; in seeming Civility, offer'd him his choice of whatever he thought fit to make his first Appearance in; though, in reality, the Favour was intended to hurt him. But *Wilks* rightly judg'd it more modest, to accept only of a Part

of *Powel's*, and which *Monfort* had never acted, that of *Palamede* in *Dryden's Marriage a la mode*. Here too, he had the Advantage of having the Ball play'd into his Hand, by the inimitable Mrs. *Monfort*, who was then his *Melantha* in the same Play: Whatever Fame *Wilks* had brought with him, from *Ireland*, he as yet appear'd but a very raw Actor, to what he was afterwards allow'd to be: His Faults however, I shall rather leave to the Judgments of those, who then may remember him, than to take upon me the disagreeable Office of being particular upon them, farther than by saying, that in this Part of *Palamede*, he was short of *Powel*, and miss'd a good deal of the loose Humour of the Character, which the other more happily hit. But however, he was young, erect, of a pleasing Aspect, and, in the whole, gavethe Town, and the Stage, sufficient Hopes of him. I ought to make some Allowances too, for the Restraint he must naturally have been under, from his first Appearance upon a new Stage. But from that he soon recovered, and grew daily more in Favour not only of the Town, but likewise of the Patentee whom *Powel*, before *Wilks's* Arrival, had treated, in almost what manner he pleas'd.

Upon this visible Success of *Wilks*, the pretended Contempt, which *Powel* had held him in, began to sour into an open Jealousy; he, now, plainly saw, he was a formidable Rival, and (which more hurt him) saw too, that other People saw it; and therefore found it

high time, to oppose, and be troublesome to him. But *Wilks* happening to be as jealous of his Fame, as the other, you may imagine such clashing Candidates could not be long without a Rupture: In short, a Challenge, I very well remember, came from *Powel*, when he was hot-headed; but the next morning he was cool enough, to let it end in favour of *Wilks*. Yet however the Magnanimity, on either Part, might subside, the Animosity was as deep in the Heart, as ever, tho' it was not afterwards so openly avow'd: For when *Powel* found that intimidating would not carry his Point; but that *Wilks*, when provok'd, would really give Battle, he (*Powel*) grew so out of humour, that he cock'd his Hat, and in his Passion walk'd off, to the Service of the Company, in *Lincoln's-Inn Fields*. But there, finding more Competitors, and that he made a worse Figure among them, than in the Company he came from, he stay'd but one Winter with them, before he returned to his old Quarters, in *Drury-Lane*; where, after these unsuccessful Pushes of his Ambition, he at last became a Martyr to Negligence, and quietly submitted to the Advantages and Superiority, which (during his late Desertion) *Wilks* had more easily got over him.

However trifling these Theatrical Anecdotes may seem, to a sensible Reader, yet as the different Conduct of these rival Actors may be of use, to others of the same Profession, and from thence may contribute to the Pleasure of the Publick; let that be my Excuse, for pursuing them.

them. I must therefore let it be known, that though in Voice, and Ear, Nature had been more kind to *Powel*, yet he so often lost the Value of them, by an unheedful Confidence; that the constant wakeful Care, and Decency, of *Wilks*, left the other far behind, in the publick Esteem, and Approbation. Nor was his Memory less tenacious than that of *Wilks*; but *Powel* put too much Trust in it, and idly deferr'd the Studying of his Parts, as School-boys do their Exercise, to the last Day; which commonly brings them out proportionably defective. But *Wilks* never lost an Hour of precious Time, and was, in all his Parts, perfect, to such an Exactitude, that I question, if in forty Years, he ever five times chang'd or mis-plac'd an Article, in any one of them. To be Master of this uncommon Diligence, is adding, to the Gift of Nature, all that is in an Actor's Power; and this Duty of Studying perfect, whatever Actor is remiss in, he will proportionably find, that Nature may have been kind to him, in vain, for though *Powel* had an Assurance, that cover'd this Neglect much better, than a Man of more Modesty might have done; yet with all his Intrepidity, very often the Diffidence, and Concern for what he was to say, made him lose the Look of what he was to be: While, therefore, *Powel* presided, his idle Example made this Fault so common to others, that I cannot but confess, in the general Infection, I had my Share of it; nor was my too critical Excuse for it, a good one, viz. That scarce

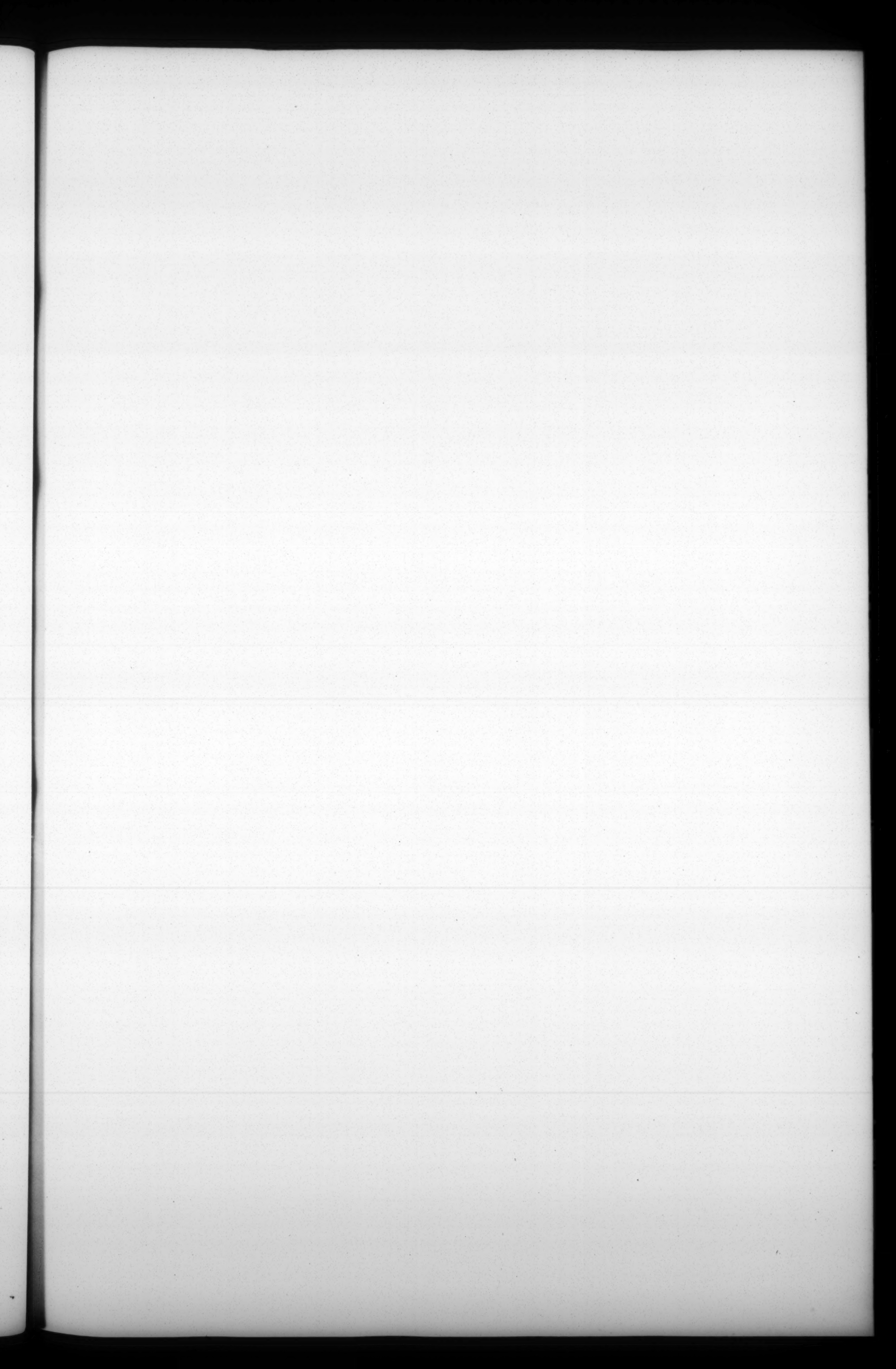
one Part, in five, that fell to my Lot, was worth the Labour. But to shew Respect to an Audience, is worth the best Actor's Labour, and, his Business consider'd, he must be a very impudent one that comes before them, with a conscious Negligence of what he is about. But *Wilks* was never known to make any of these venial Distinctions, nor however barren his Part might be, could bear even the Self-Reproach of favouring his Memory: And I have been astonish'd, to see him swallow a Volume of Froth, and Insipidity, in a new Play, that we were sure could not live above three Days, tho' favour'd, and recommended to the Stage, by some good person of Quality. Upon such Occasions, in Compassion to his fruitless Toil, and Labour, I have sometimes cry'd out with *Cato*—*Painful Præminence!* So insupportable, in my Sense, was the Task, when the bare Praise, of not having been negligent, was sure to be the only Reward of it. But so indefatigable was the Diligence of *Wilks*, that he seem'd to love it, as a good Man does Virtue, for its own sake; of which the following Instance will give you an extraordinary Proof.

In some new Comedy, he happen'd to complain of a crabbed Speech in his Part, which, he said, gave him more trouble to study, than all the rest of it had done; upon which, he apply'd to the Author, either to soften, or shorten it. The Author, that he might make the Matter quite easy to him, fairly cut it all

out. But, when he got home, from the Rehearſal, *Wilks* thought it ſuch an Indignity to his Memory that any thing ſhould be thought too hard for it, that he actually made himſelf perfect in that ſpeech, though he knew it was never to be made uſe of. From this ſingular Act of Supererogation, you may judge, how indefatigable the Labour of his Memory muſt have been, when his Profit, and Honour, were more concern'd to make uſe of it.

But beſides this indiſpenſible Quality of Diligence, *Wilks* had the Advantage of a ſober Character, in private Life, which *Powel* not having the leaſt Regard to, labour'd under the unhappy Diſfavour, not to ſay, Contempt, of the Publick, to whom his licentious Courſes were no Secret: Even when he did well, that natural Prejudice purſu'd him; neither the Heroe, nor the Gentleman; the young *Ammon*, nor the *Dorimant*, could conceal, from the conſcious Spectator, the True *George Powel*. And this ſort of Diſeſteem, or Favour, every Actor, will feel, and more, or leſs, have his Share of, as he *has*, or *has not*, a due Regard to his private Life, and Reputation. Nay, even falſe Reports ſhall affect him, and become the Cauſe, or Pretence at leaſt, of undervaluing, or treating him injuriouſly. Let me give a known Inſtance of it, and, at the ſame time, a Juſtification of myſelf, from an Imputation, that was laid upon me, many Years, before I quitted the Theatre, of which you will ſee the Conſequence.

After





— French press

Wm. Smith del. et sculp.

JOHANNES GAY.

*Life is a jest and all things show it.
I thought so once, but now I know it.*

After the vast Success of that new Species of Dramatick Poetry, the *Beggar's Opera*; the Year following, I was so stupid, as to attempt something of the same Kind, upon a quite different Foundation, that of recommending Virtue and Innocence; which Ignorantly thought, might not have a less Pretence to Favour, than setting Greatness, and Authority, in a contemptible, and the most vulgar Vice, and Wickedness, in an amiable Light. But behold how fondly I was mistaken! *Love in a Riddle* (for so my new-fangled Performance was called) was as vilely damn'd, and hooted at, as so vain a Presumption, in the idle Cause of Virtue, could deserve. Yet this is not what I complain of; I will allow my Poetry, to be as much below the other, as Taste, or Criticism, can sink it: I will grant likewise, that the applauded Author of the *Beggars Opera* (whom I knew to be an honest good-natur'd Man, and who, when he had descended to write more like one, in the Cause of Virtue, had been as unfortunate, as others of that Class;) I will grant, I say, that in his *Beggars Opera*, he had more skilfully gratify'd the Publick Taste, than all the brightest Authors that ever writ before him; and I have sometimes thought, from the Modesty of his Motto, *Nos hæc novimus esse nihil*, that he gave them that Performance as a Satyr upon the Depravity of their Judgment (as Ben. Jonson, of old, was said to give his *Bartholomew-Fair*, in Ridicule of the vulgar Taste; which had disliked his *Sejanus*)

and that, by artfully seducing them, to be the Champions, of the Immoralities he himself detested, he should be amply reveng'd on their former Severity, and Ignorance. This were indeed a Triumph! which, even the Author of *Cato*, might have envy'd. *Cato*! 'tis true, succeeded, but reach'd not, by full forty Days, the Progress, and Applauses of the *Beggars Opera*. Will it, however, admit of a Question, which of the two Compositions, a good Writer, would rather wish to have been the Author of? Yet, on the other side, must we not allow, that to have taken a whole Nation, High, and Low, into a general Applause, has shown a Power in Poetry, which though often attempted in the same kind, none but this one Author, could ever yet arrive at? By what Rule, then, are we to judge of our true National Taste? But, to keep a little closer to my Point.

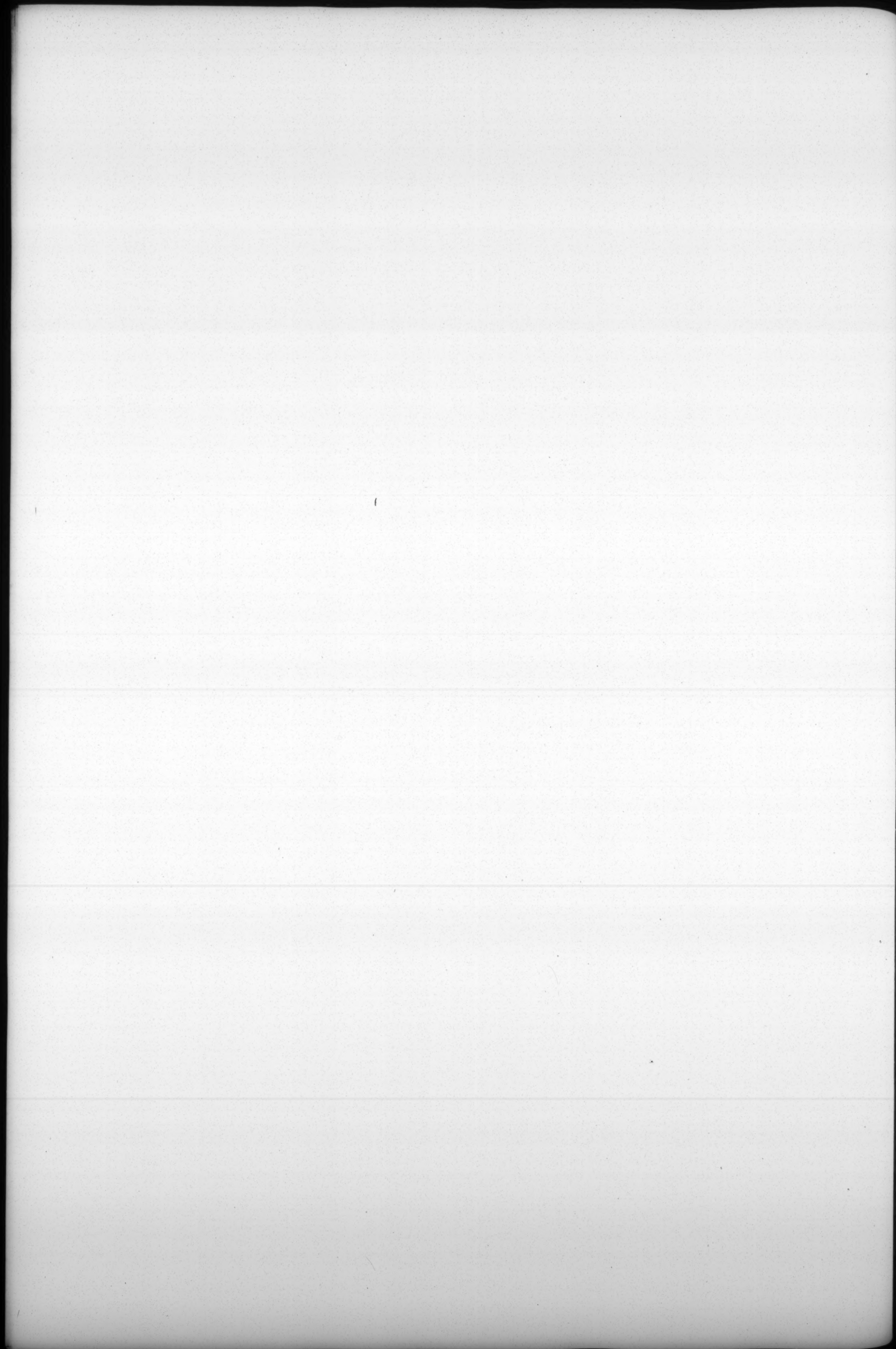
The same Author, the next Year, had, according to the Laws of the Land transported his Heroe to the *West-Indies*, in a Second Part to the *Beggars Opera*; but so it happen'd, to the Surprize of the Publick, this Second Part was forbid to come upon the Stage! Various were the Speculations, upon this act of Power: Some thought that the Author, others that the Town, was hardly dealt with; a third sort, who perhaps had envy'd him the Success of his first Part, affirm'd, when it was printed, that, whatever the Intention might be, the Fact was in his Favour, that he had been a greater Gainer, by Subscriptions to his Copy,
than

than he could have been by a bare Theatrical Presentation. Whether any Part of these Opinions were true, I am not concerned to determine, or consider. But how they affected me, I am going to tell you. Soon after this Prohibition, my Performance was to come upon the Stage, at a time, when many People were out of Humour at the late Disappointment, and seem'd willing to lay hold of any Pretence of making a Reprizal. Great Umbrage was taken, that I was permitted, to have the whole Town to myself, by this absolute Forbiddance of what, they had more mind to have been entertain'd with. And, some few Days before my Bawble was acted, I was inform'd, that a strong Party would be made against it: This Report I slighted, as not conceiving why it should be true; and when I was afterwards told, what was the pretended Provocation of this Party, I slighted it, still more, as having less Reason to suppose, any Persons could believe me capable (had I had the Power) of giving such a Provocation. The Report, it seems, that had run against me, was this: That, to make way for the Success of my own Play, I had privately found means, or made Interest, that the Second Part of the *Beggars Opera*, might be suppressed. What an involuntary Compliment did the Reporters of this Falshood make me: to suppose me of Consideration enough to Influence a great Officer of State to gratify the Spleen, or Envy of a Comedian, so far as to rob the Publick of an innocent

innocent Diversion (if it were such) that none, but that cunning Comedian, might be suffered to give it them. This is so very gross a Supposition, that it needs only its own senseless Face, to confound it; let that alone, then, be my Defence against it. But against blind Malice, and staring Inhumanity, whatever is upon the Stage, has no Defence! There, they knew, I stood helpless, and expos'd, to whatever they might please to load, or asperse me with. I had not consider'd, poor Devil! that, from the Security of a full Pit, Dunces, might be Criticks, Cowards valiant, and 'Prentices Gentlemen! Whether any such were concern'd in the Murder of my Play, I am not certain; for I never endeavour'd, to discover any one of its Assassins; I cannot afford them a milder Name, from their unmanly manner of destroying it. Had it been heard, they might have left me nothing to say to them: 'Tis true, it faintly held up its wounded Head, a second Day, and would have spoke for Mercy, but was not suffer'd. Not even the Presence of a Royal Heir apparent, could protect it. But then I was reduc'd to be serious with them; their Clamour, then, became an Insolence, which I thought it my Duty, by the Sacrifice of any Interest of my own, to put an end to. I therefore quitted the Actor, for the Author, and, stepping forward to the Pit, told them, *That since I found they were not inclin'd, that this Play should go forward, I gave them my Word, that after this Night, it should never be acted again: But that,*



His Highness The Duke of Gloucester.
G. Kneller ad vivum pinxit *J. Smith fecit & excudit*



in the mean time, I hop'd, they would consider, in whose Presence they were, and for that Reason, at least, would suspend what farther Marks of their Displeasure, they might imagine I had deserved. At this there was a dead Silence; and, after some little Pause, a few civiliz'd Hands, signify'd their Approbation. When the Play went on, I observ'd about a Dozen Persons, of no extraordinary Appearance, suddenly walk'd out of the Pit. After which, every Scene of it, while uninterrupted, met with more Applause, than my best Hopes had expected. But it came too late: Peace to its *Manes!* I had given my Word it should fall, and I kept it, by giving out another Play, for the next Day, though I knew the Boxes were all lett for the same again. Such, then, was the Treatment I met with: How much of it, the Errors of the Play might deserve, I refer to the Judgment of those who may have Curiosity, and idle time enough to read it. But if I had no occasion to complain of the Reception it met with, from its *quieted* Audience, sure it can be no great Vanity, to impute its Disgraces chiefly, to that severe Resentment, which a groundless Report of me had inflam'd: Yet those Disgraces have left me something to boast of, an Honour preferable, even to the Applause of my Enemies: A noble Lord came behind the Scenes, and told me, from the Box, where he was in waiting, *That what I said, to quiet the Audience, was extremely well taken there; and that I had been com-*
mended

mended for it, in a very obliging manner. Now, though this was the only Tumult, that I have known to have been so effectually appeas'd, these fifty Years, by any thing that could be said to an Audience, in the same Humour, I will not take any great Merit to myself upon it; because when, like me, you will but humbly submit to their doing you all the Mischief they can, they will, at any time, be satisfy'd.

I have mention'd this particular Fact, to enforce what I before observ'd, That the private Character of an Actor will always, more or less, affect his Publick Performance. And if I suffer'd so much, from the bare *Suspicion* of my having been guilty of a base Action; what should not an Actor expect, that is hardly enough, to think his whole private Character of no consequence? I could offer many more, tho' less severe Instances, of the same Nature. I have seen the most tender Sentiment of Love, in Tragedy, create Laughter, instead of Compassion, when it has been applicable to the real Engagements of the Person, that utter'd it. I have known good Parts thrown up, from an humble Consciousness, that something in them, might put an Audience in mind of — what was rather wish'd might be forgotten: Those remarkable Words of *Evadne*, in the *Maid's Tragedy* — *A Maiden-head, Amintor, at my Years?* — have sometimes been a much stronger Jest, for being a true one. But these are Reproaches, which,
in

in all Nations, the Theatre must have been us'd to, unless we could suppose Actors something more, than Human Creatures, void of Faults, or Frailties. 'Tis a Misfortune, at least, not limited to the *English* Stage. I have seen the better-bred Audience, in *Paris*, made merry, even with a modest Expression, when it has come from the Mouth of an Actress, whose private Character it seem'd not to belong to. The Apprehension of these kind of Fleers, from the Witlings of a Pit, has been carry'd so far, in our own Country, that a late valuable Actress (who was conscious her Beauty was not her greatest Merit) desired the Warmth of some Lines might be abated, when they have made her too remarkably handsome: But in this Discretion she was alone, few others were afraid of undeserving the finest things, that could be said, to them. But to consider this Matter seriously, I cannot but think, at a Play, a sensible Auditor would contribute all he could, to his being well deceiv'd, and not suffer his Imagination, so far to wander, from the well-acted Character before him, as to gratify a frivolous Spleen, by Mocks, or personal Sneers, on the Performer, at the Expence of his better Entertainment. But I must now take up *Wilks*, and *Powel*, again, where I left them.

Though the Contention for Superiority, between them, seem'd about this time, to end in favour of the former, yet the Distress of the Patentee (in having his Servant his Master, as

Powel had lately been) was not much reliev'd by the Victory; he had only chang'd the Man, but not the Malady: For *Wilks*, by being in Possession of so many good Parts, fell into the common Error of most Actors, that of overrating their Merit, or never thinking it is so thoroughly consider'd, as it ought to be; which generally makes them proportionably troublesome to the Master; who, they might consider, only pays them, to profit by them. The Patentee therefore, found it as difficult to satisfy the continual Demands of *Wilks*, as it was dangerous to refuse them; very few were made, that were not granted, and as few were granted, as were not grudg'd him: Not but our good Master, was as fly a Tyrant, as ever was at the Head of a Theatre; for he gave the Actors more Liberty, and fewer Days Pay, than any of his Predecessors: He would laugh with them over a Bottle, and bite them, in their Bargains: He kept them poor, that they might not be able to rebel; and sometimes merry, that they might not think of it: All their Articles of Agreement had a Clause in them, that he was sure to creep out at, *viz.* Their respective Sallaries, were to be paid, in such manner, and proportion, as others of the same Company were paid; which in effect, made them all, when he pleas'd, but limited Sharers of Loss, and himself sole Proprietor of Profits; and this Loss, or Profit, they only had such verbal Accounts of, as he thought proper to give them. 'Tis true, he would sometimes
advance

advance them Money (but not more, than he knew at most could be due to them) upon their Bonds; upon which, whenever they were mutinous, he would threaten to sue them. This was the Net we danc'd in for several Years: But no wonder we were Dupes, while our Master was a Lawyer. This Grievance, however, *Wilks* was resolv'd for himself, at least, to remedy at any rate; and grew daily more intractable, for every Day his Redress was delay'd. Here our Master found himself under a Difficulty, he knew not well how to get out of: For as he was a close subtle Man, he seldom made use of a Confident, in his Schemes of Government: But here the old Expedient of Delay, would stand him in no longer stead; *Wilks* must instantly be comply'd with, or *Powel* come again into Power! In a word, he was push'd so home, that he was reduc'd even to take my Opinion into his Assistance: For he knew I was a Rival to neither of them; perhaps too, he had fancy'd, that from the Success of my first Play, I might know as much of the Stage, and what made an Actor valuable, as either of them: He saw too, that tho' they had each of them five good Parts to my one; yet the Applause which in my few, I had met with, was given me by better Judges, than, as yet, had approv'd of the best they had done. They generally measured the goodness of a Part, by the Quantity, or Length of it: I thought none bad for being short, that were closely-natural; nor any the better, for being long,

long, without that valuable Quality. But, in this, I doubt, as to their Interest, they judg'd better, than myself; for I have generally observ'd, that those, who do a great deal not ill, have been preferr'd to those, who do but little, though never so masterly. And therefore I allow, that while there were so few good Parts, and as few good Judges of them, it ought to have been no Wonder to me, that, as an Actor, I was less valued, by the Master, or the common People, than either of them: All the Advantage I had of them, was, that by not being troublesome, I had more of our Master's personal Inclination, than any Actor of the Male Sex; and so much of it, that I was almost the only one, whom at that time, he us'd to take into his Parties of Pleasure; very often *tete à tete*, and sometimes, in a *Partie quarree*. These then were the Qualifications, however good, or bad, to which may be imputed our Master's having made choice of me, to assist him, in the Difficulty, under which he now labour'd. He was himself sometimes inclin'd to set up *Powel* again as a Check upon the over-bearing Temper of *Wilks*: Tho' to say truth, he lik'd neither of them; but was still under a Necessity, that one of them should preside; tho' he scarce knew which of the two Evils to chuse. This Question, when I happen'd to be alone with him, was often debated in our Evening Conversation; nor indeed, did I find it an easy matter to know which Party I ought to recommend

to

to his Election. I knew they were neither of them Well-wishers to me, as in common they were Enemies to most Actors, in proportion to the Merit, that seem'd to be rising, in them. But as I had the Prosperity of the Stage more at Heart, than any other Consideration, I could not be long undetermined, in my Opinion, and therefore gave it to our Master, at once, in Favour of *Wilks*. I, with all the Force I could muster, insisted, "That if *Powel* were preferr'd, the ill Example of his Negligence, and abandon'd Character (whatever his Merit on the Stage might be) would reduce our Company to Contempt, and Beggary; observing at the same time, in how much better Order our Affairs went forward, since *Wilks* came among us, of which I recounted several Instances, that are not so necessary to tire my Reader with. All this, though he allow'd to be true; yet *Powel*, he said, was a better Actor than *Wilks*, when he minded his Business (that is to say, when he was, what he seldom was, sober). But *Powel*, it seems, had a still greater Merit to him, which was, (as he observ'd) that when Affairs were in his Hands, he had kept the Actors quiet, without one Day's Pay, for six Weeks together, and it was not every body could do that; for you see, said he, *Wilks* will never be easy, unless I give him his whole Pay, when others have it not, and what an Injustice would that be to the rest, if I were to comply with him? How

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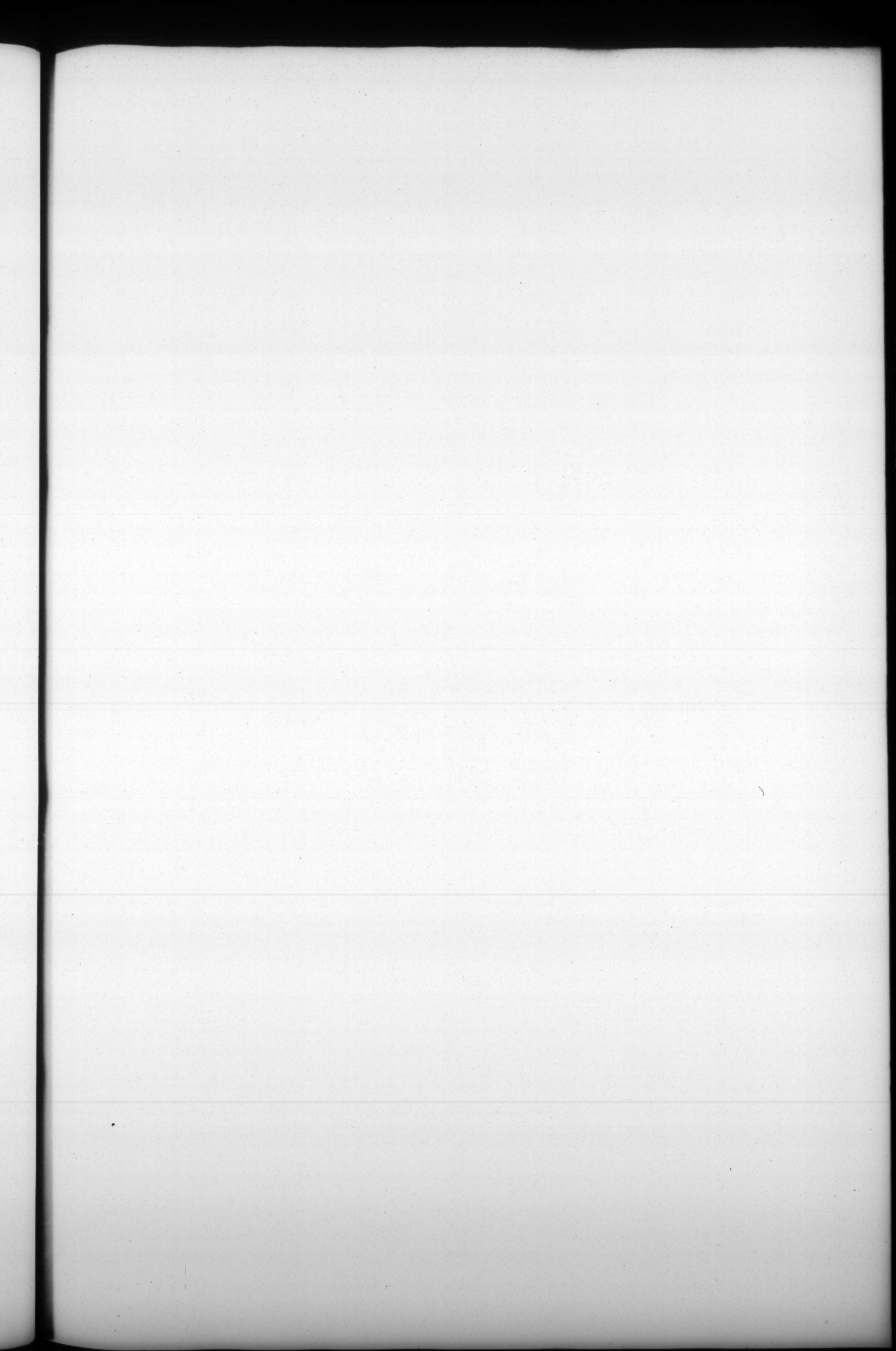
“ do I know, but then they may be all, in a
 “ Mutiny, and *mayhap* (that was this Expres-
 “ sion) with *Powel* at the Head of 'em? ”
 By this Specimen of our Debate, it may be
 judg'd, under how particular, and merry a
 Government, the Theatre then labour'd. To
 conclude, this Matter ended in a Resolution,
 to sign a new Agreement, with *Wilks*, which
 entitled him, to his full Pay of four Pounds a
 Week, without any conditional Deductions.
 How far soever my Advice might have con-
 tributed to our Master's settling his Affairs upon
 this Foot, I never durst make the least Merit
 of it to *Wilks*, well knowing that his great
 Heart would have taken it as a mortal Affront,
 had I (tho' never so distantly) hinted, that his
 Demands had needed any Assistance, but the
 Justice of them. From this time, then, *Wilks*
 became first Minister, or Bustle-master general
 of the Company. He, now, seem'd to take
 new Delight, in keeping the Actors close to
 their Business; and got every Play reviv'd with
 Care, in which he had acted the chief Part, in
Dublin: 'Tis true, this might be done with a
 particular View of setting off himself to Ad-
 vantage; but if, at the same time, it served
 the Company, he ought not to want our Com-
 mendation: Now tho' my own Conduct, nei-
 ther had the Appearance of his Merit, nor the
 Reward that follow'd his Industry; I cannot
 help observing, that it shew'd me, to the best
 of my Power, a more cordial Common-
 wealth's Man: His first Views, in serving

†

himself

himself, made his Service to the whole but an incidental Merit; whereas, by my prosecuting the Means, to make him easy, in his Pay, unknown to him, or without asking any Favour for my self, at the same time, I gave a more unquestionable Proof of my preferring the Publick, to my Private Interest: From the same Principle I never murmur'd at whatever little Parts fell to my Share, and though I knew it would not recommend me to the Favour of the common People, I often submitted to play wicked Characters, rather than they should be worse done by weaker Actors than my self: But perhaps, in all this Patience under my Situation, I supported my Spirits, by a conscious Vanity: For I fancied I had more Reason to value myself, upon being sometimes the Confident, and Companion of our Master, than *Wilks* had, in all the more publick Favours he had extorted from him. I imagined too, there was sometimes as much Skill to be shewn, in a short Part, as in the most voluminous, which he generally made choice of; that even the coxcomby Follies of a Sir *John Daw*, might as well distinguish the Capacity of an Actor, as all the dry Enterprizes, and busy Conduct of a *Truewit*. Nor could I have any Reason to repine at the Superiority he enjoy'd when I consider'd at how dear a Rate it was purchased, at the continual Expence of a restless Jealousy, and fretful Impatience—These were the Passions, that, in the height of his Successes, kept him lean, to his last Hour, while what I want-

ed in Rank, or Glory, was amply made up to me, in Ease and Chearfulness. But let not this Observation either lessen his Merit, or lift up my own; since our different Tempers were not, in our Choice, but equally natural, to both of us. To be employ'd on the Stage was the Delight of his Life; to be justly excused from it, was the Joy of mine: I lov'd Ease, and he Pre-eminence: In that, he might be more commendable. Tho' he often disturb'd me, he seldom could do it, without more disordering himself: In our Disputes, his Warmth could less bear Truth, than I could support manifest Injuries: He would hazard our Undoing, to gratify his Passions, tho' otherwise an honest Man; and I rather chose to give up my Reason, or not see my Wrong, than ruin our Community by an equal Rashness. By this opposite Conduct, our Accounts at the End of our Labours, stood thus: While he lived, he was the elder Man, when he died, he was not so old as I am: He never left the Stage, till he left the World: I never so well enjoy'd the World, as when I left the Stage: He died in Possession of his Wishes; and I, by having had a less cholerick Ambition, am still tasting mine, in Health, and Liberty. But, as he in a great measure wore out the Organs of Life, in his incessant Labours, to gratify the Publick, the Many whom he gave Pleasure to, will always owe his Memory a favourable Report—Some Facts, that will vouch for the Truth of this Account, will be found in the
Sequel





JAMES MILLS the Elder

*From an Original Picture in the collection of Miss Pope,
of Drury Lane Theatre*

Engraved by F. & S. Harding Pall Mall

Sequel of these Memoirs. If I have spoke with more Freedom of his quondam Competitor *Powel*, let my good Intentions to future Actors, in shewing what will so much concern them to avoid, be my Excuse for it: For though *Powel* had from Nature, much more than *Wilks*; in Voice, and Ear, in Elocution, in Tragedy, and Humour in Comedy, greatly the Advantage of him; yet, as I have observ'd, from the Neglect, and Abuse of those valuable Gifts, he suffer'd *Wilks* to be of thrice the Service to our Society. Let me give another Instance of the Reward, and Favour which in a Theatre, Diligence, and Sobriety seldom fail of: *Mills* the elder grew into the Friendship of *Wilks*, with not a great deal more, than those useful Qualities to recommend him: He was an honest, quiet, careful Man, of as few Faults, as Excellencies, and *Wilks* rather chose him for his second, in many Plays, than an Actor of perhaps greater Skill, that was not so laboriously diligent. And from this constant Affiduity, *Mills* with making to himself a Friend in *Wilks*, was advanced to a larger Salary, than any Man-Actor had enjoy'd, during my time, on the Stage. I have yet to offer a more happy Recommendation of Temperance which a late celebrated Actor was warn'd into by the mis-conduct of *Powel*. About the Year, that *Wilks* returned from *Dublin*, *Booth*, who had commenced Actor, upon that Theatre, came over to the Company, in *Lincolns Inn-Fields*: He was then but an Under-graduate of

the Buskin, and as he told me himself, had been for some time too frank a Lover of the Bottle; but having had the Happiness to observe into what Contempt, and Distresses *Powel* had plung'd himself by the same Vice, he was so struck with the Terror of his Example, that he fix'd a Resolution (which from that time, to the End of his Days, he strictly observ'd) of utterly reforming it; an uncommon Act of Philosophy in a young Man! of which in his Fame, and Fortune, he afterwards enjoy'd the Reward and Benefit. These Observations I have not merely thrown together as a Moralist, but to prove, that the briskest loose Liver, or intemperate Man (though Morality were out of the Question) can never arrive at the necessary Excellencies of a good, or useful Actor.





C H A P. VIII.

The Patentee of Drury-Lane wiser than his Actors. His particular Management. The Author continues to write Plays. Why The best dramatick Poets censured, by J. Collier, in his Short View of the Stage. It has a good Effect. The Master of the Revels, from that time, cautious, in his licensing new Plays. A Complaint against him. His Authority founded upon Custom only. The late Law for fixing that Authority, in a proper Person, considered.

THOUGH the Master of our Theatre had no Conception himself of Theatrical Merit, either in Authors, or Actors; yet his Judgment was govern'd by a favouring Rule, in both: He look'd into his Receipts for the Value of a Play, and from common Fame he judg'd of his Actors. But by whatever Rule he was govern'd, while he had prudently reserv'd to himself a Power of not paying them more than their Merit could get, he could not be much deceived by their being over, or under-valued. In a Word, he had, with great Skill inverted the Constitution of the Stage, and quite changed the Channel of Profits, arising from it; formerly, (when there was but one Company) the Proprietors punctually paid

the Actors their appointed Sallaries, and took to themselves only the clear Profits: But our wiser Proprietor, took first out of every Day's Receipts two Shillings in the Pound to himself; and left their Sallaries, to be paid, only, as the less, or greater Deficiencies of acting (according to his own Accounts) would permit. What seem'd most extraordinary in these Measures, was, that at the same time, he had persuaded us to be contented with our Condition, upon his assuring us, that as fast as Money would come in, we should all be paid our Arrears: And that we might not have it always in our Power to say he had never intended to keep his Word; I remember in a few Years, after this time, he once paid us nine Days, in one Week: This happen'd, when the *Funeral*, or *Grief à la Mode* was first acted, with more than expected Success. Whether this well-tim'd Bounty was only allow'd us, to save Appearances, I will not say: But if that was his real Motive for it, it was too costly a Frolick to be repeated, and was, at least the only Grimace of its kind he vouchsafed us; we never having received one Day more of those Arrears, in above fifteen Years Service.

While the Actors were in this Condition, I think I may very well be excused, in my presuming to write Plays: which I was forced to do, for the Support of my encreasing Family, my precarious Income, as an Actor, being then too scanty, to supply it, with even the Necessaries of Life.

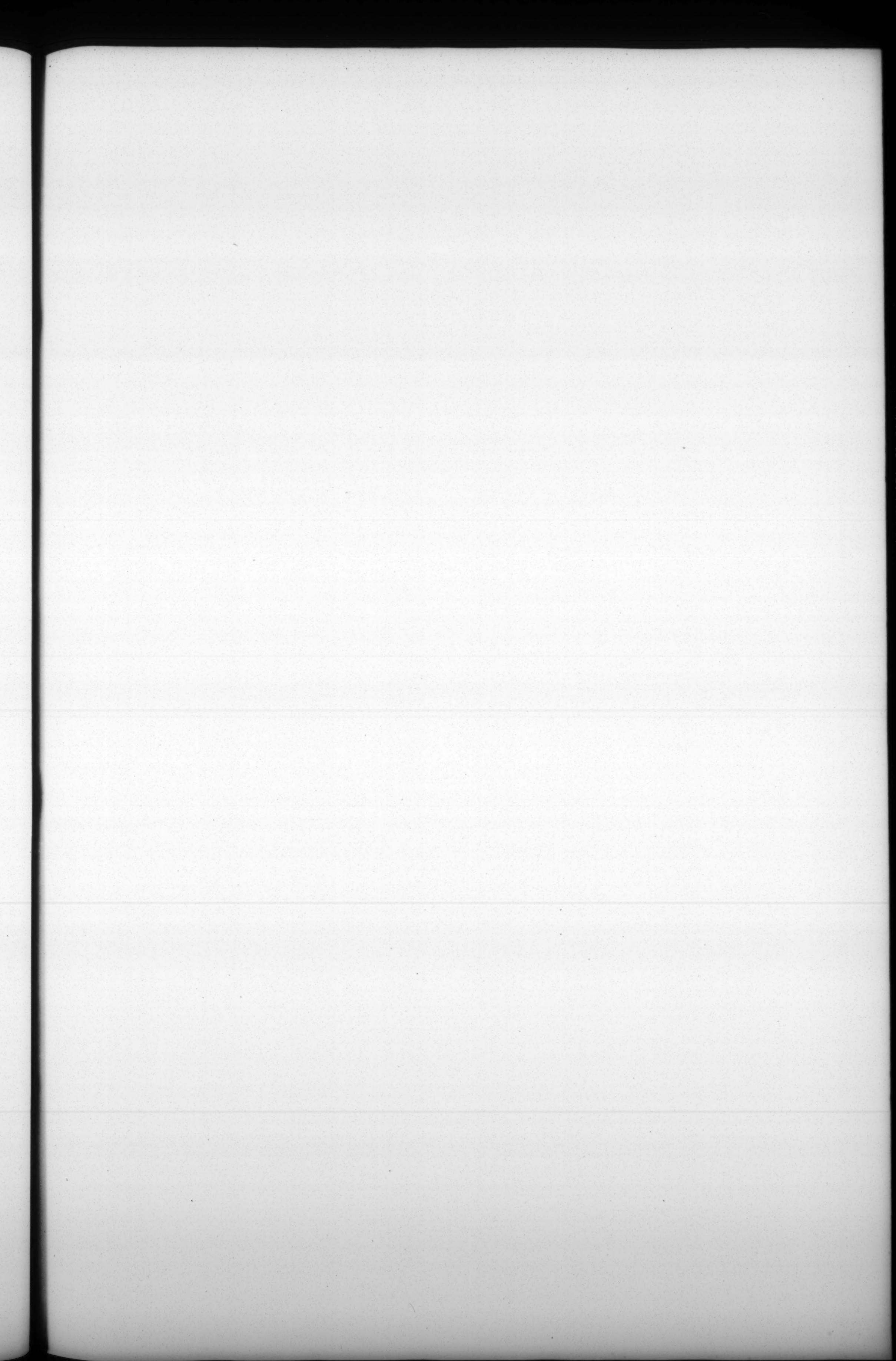
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It may be observable too, that my Muse, and my Spouse were equally prolifick; that the one was seldom the Mother of a Child, but in the same Year the other made me the Father of a Play: I think we had a Dozen of each Sort between us; of both which kinds, some died in their Infancy, and near an equal Number of each were alive, when I quitted the Theatre—But it is no Wonder, when a Muse is only call'd upon, by Family Duty, she should not always rejoice, in the Fruit of her Labour: To this Necessity of writing then, I attribute the Defects of my second Play, which coming out too hastily, the Year after my first, turn'd to very little Account. But having got as much, by my first, as I ought to have expected, from the Success of them both, I had no great Reason to complain: Not but, I confess so bad was my second, that I do not chuse to tell you the Name of it; and that it might be peaceably forgotten, I have not given it a Place, in the two Volumes of those I published in Quarto in the Year 1721. And whenever I took upon me, to make some dormant Play of an old Author, to the best of my Judgment, fitter for the Stage, it was honestly, not to be idle, that set me to work; as a good Housewife will mend old Linnen, when she has not better Employment: But when I was more warmly engag'd by a Subject entirely new, I only thought it a good Subject, when it seem'd worthy of an abler Pen, than my own, and might prove as useful to the Hearer,

as

as profitable to myself: Therefore, whatever any of my Productions, might want of Skill, Learning, Wit, or Humour, or however unqualify'd I might be to instruct others, who so ill govern'd my self: Yet such Plays (entirely my own) were not wanting, at least, in what our most admired Writers seem'd to neglect, and without which, I cannot allow the most taking Play, to be intrinsically good, or to be a Work, upon which a Man of Sense and Probity should value himself: I mean when they do not, as well *prodesse*, as *delectare*, give Profit with Delight! The *Utile Dulci* was, of old, equally the Point; and has always been my Aim, however wide of the Mark, I may have shot my Arrow. It has often given me Amazement, that our best Authors of that time, could think the Wit, and Spirit of their Scenes, could be an Excuse for making the Looseness of them publick. The many Instances of their Talents so abused, are too glaring, to need a closer Comment, and are sometimes too gross to be recited. If then to have avoided this Imputation, or rather to have had the Interest, and Honour of Virtue always in view, can give Merit to a Play; I am contented that my Readers should think such Merit, the All, that mine have to boast of—Libertines of meer Wit, and Pleasure, may laugh at these grave Laws, that would limit a lively Genius: But every sensible honest Man, conscious of their Truth, and Use, will give these Ralliers Smile for Smile, and shew a due Contempt for their Merriment.

But





G. Kneller Baron. ^t pinx.

G. White fecit

Mr. John Dryden.

J. 1700

Sold by Thomas Bowles Printseller in St Pauls Church Yard, London

But while our Authors took these extraordinary Liberties with their Wit, I remember the Ladies were then observ'd, to be decently afraid of venturing bare-fac'd to a new Comedy, 'till they had been assur'd they might do it, without the Risque of an Insult, to their Modesty—Or, if their Curiosity were too strong, for their Patience, they took Care, at least, to save Appearances, and rarely came upon the first Days of Acting but in Masks, (then daily worn, and admitted in the Pit, the side Boxes, and Gallery) which Custom however, had so many ill Consequences attending it, that it has been abolish'd these many Years.

These Immoralities of the Stage, had by an avow'd Indulgence been creeping into it ever since King *Charles* his Time; nothing that was loose could then be too low for it: The *London Cuckolds*, the most rank Play that ever succeeded, was then in the highest Court-Favour: In this almost general Corruption, *Dryden*, whose Plays were more fam'd for their Wit, than their Chastity, led the way, which he fairly confesses, and endeavours to excuse, in his Epilogue to the *Pilgrim*, revived in 1700 for his Benefit, in his declining Age, and Fortune—The following Lines of it will make good my Observation.

*Perhaps the Parson stretch'd a Point too far,
When, with our Theatres he wag'd a War.*

He

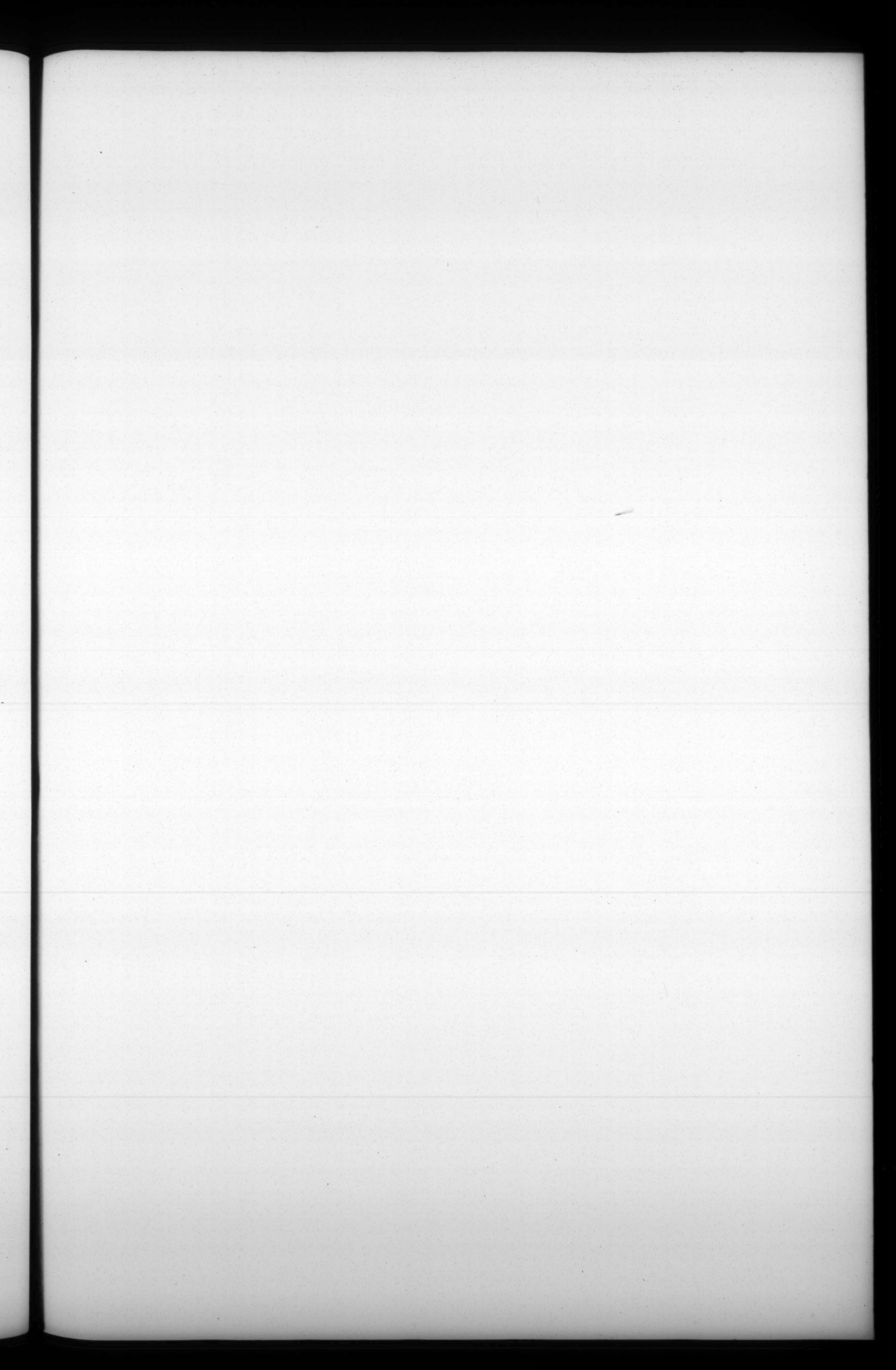
220 *The LIFE of*

*He tells you, that this very moral Age
 Receiv'd the first Infection from the Stage.
 But sure, a banish'd Court, with Lewdness
 fraught,
 The Seeds of open Vice returning brought.
 Thus lodg'd (as Vice by great Example thrives)
 It first debauch'd the Daughters, and the Wives.
 London, a fruitful Soil, yet never bore
 So plentiful a Crop of Horns before.
 The Poets, who must live by Courts or starve,
 Were proud, so good a Government to serve.
 And mixing with Buffoons, and Pimps pro-
 fane,
 Tainted the Stage, for some small snip of Gain.
 For they, like Harlots under Bawds protest,
 Took all th'ungodly Pains, and got the least.
 Thus did the thriving Malady prevail,
 The Court, its Head, the Poets but the Tail.
 The Sin was of our native Growth, 'tis true,
 The Scandal of the Sin was wholly new.
 Misses there were, but modestly conceal'd;
 White-hall the naked Venus first reveal'd.
 Where standing as at Cyprus, in her Shrine,
 The Strumpet was ador'd with Rites divine,
 &c.*

This Epilogue, and the Prologue, to the
 same Play, written by *Dryden*, I spoke myself,
 which not being usually done by the same
 Person, I have a mind, while I think of it,
 to let you know on what Occasion they both
 fell to my Share, and how other Actors were
 affected by it.

†

Sir





W. Kneller Bar. Pinx.

J. Faber fecit 1733

Sir John Vanbrugh

Sir *John Vanbrugh*, who had given some light touches of his Pen to the *Pilgrim*, to assist the Benefit Day of *Dryden*, had the Disposal of the Parts, and I being then, as an Actor, in some Favour with him, he read the Play first, with me alone, and was pleased to offer me my Choice of what I might like best for myself, in it. But as the chief Characters were not (according to my Taste) the most shining, it was no great Self-denial in me, that I desir'd, he would first take care of those, who were more difficult to be pleas'd; I therefore only chose, for myself, two short incidental Parts, that of *the stuttering Cook*, and *the mad Englishman*. In which homely Characters, I saw more Matter for Delight, than those that might have a better Pretence to the Amiable: And when the Play came to be acted, I was not deceiv'd, in my Choice. Sir *John*, upon my being contented with so little a Share in the Entertainment, gave me the Epilogue to make up my Mefs; which being written so much above the Strain of common Authors, I confess, I was not a little pleas'd with. And *Dryden*, upon his hearing me repeat it, to him, made me a farther Compliment of trusting me with the Prologue. This so particular Distinction was look'd upon, by the Actors, as something too extraordinary. But no one was so impatiently ruffled at it, as *Wilks*, who seldom chose soft Words, when he spoke of any thing he did not like. The most gentle thing he said of it was, that he did not understand such

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Treatment; that for his Part he look'd upon it, as an Affront to all the rest of the Company; that there shou'd be but one out of the Whole judg'd fit to speak either a Prologue, or an Epiogue! to quiet him, I offer'd to decline either in his Favour, or both, if it were equally easy to the Author: But he was too much concern'd, to accept of an Offer, that had been made to another in preference to himself; and which he seem'd to think his best way of resenting, was to condemn. But from that time, however, he was resolv'd, to the best of his Power, never to let the first Offer of a Prologue escape him: Which little Ambition sometimes made him pay too dear, for his Success: The Flatness of the many miserable Prologues, that by this means fell to his Lot, seem'd wofully unequal, to the few good ones he might have Reason to triumph in.

I have given you this Fact, only as a Sample of those frequent Rubs, and Impediments I met with, when any Step was made to my being distinguish'd as an Actor; and from this Incident too, you may partly see what occasion'd so many Prologues, after the Death of *Betterton*, to fall into the Hands of one Speaker: But it is not every Successor, to a vacant Post, that brings into it, the Talents, equal to those of a Predecessor. To speak a good Prologue well is, in my Opinion, one of the hardest Parts, and strongest Proofs of sound Elocution, of which, I confess, I never thought, that

that any of the several who attempted it shew'd themselves, by far, equal Masters to *Betterton*. *Betterton*, in the Delivery of a good Prologue, had a natural Gravity, that gave Strength to good Sense; a temper'd Spirit, that gave Life to Wit; and a dry Reserve in his Smile, that threw Ridicule into its brightest Colours. Of these Qualities, in the speaking of a Prologue, *Booth* only had the first, but attain'd not to the other two: *Wilks* had Spirit, but gave too loose a Rein to it, and it was seldom he could speak a grave and weighty Verse harmoniously: His Accents were frequently too sharp, and violent, which sometimes occasion'd his eagerly cutting off half the Sound of Syllables, that ought to have been gently melted into the Melody of Metre: In Verses of Humour too, he would sometimes carry the Mimickry farther than the hint would bear, even to a trifling Light, as if himself were pleased to see it so glittering. In the Truth of this Criticism, I have been confirm'd by those, whose Judgment, I dare more confidently rely on, than my own: *Wilks* had many Excellencies, but if we leave Prologue-Speaking out of the Number, he will still have enough to have made him a valuable Actor. And I only make this Exception, from them, to caution others from imitating, what, in his time, they might have too implicitly admir'd—But I have a Word or two more to say concerning the Immoralities of the Stage. Our Theatrical Writers were not only accus'd
of

of Immorality, but Prophaneness; many flagrant Instances of which, were collected and published by a Non-juring Clergyman, *Jeremy Collier*, in his *View of the Stage*, &c. about the Year 1697. However just his Charge against the Authors, that then wrote for it, might be; I cannot but think his Sentence against the Stage itself is unequal; Reformation he thinks too mild a Treatment for it, and is therefore for laying his Ax to the Root of it: If this were to be a Rule of Judgment, for Offences of the same Nature, what might become of the Pulpit, where many a seditious, and corrupted Teacher has been known, to cover the most pernicious Doctrine, with the Masque of Religion? This puts me in mind of what the noted *Jo. Hains*, the Comedian, a Fellow of a wicked Wit, said upon this Occasion; who being ask'd what could transport Mr. *Collier* into so blind a Zeal for a general Suppression of the Stage, when only some particular Authors had abus'd it? Whereas the Stage, he could not but know, was generally allow'd, when rightly conducted, to be a delightful Method of mending our Morals? "For that Reason," reply'd *Hains*: *Collier* is by Profession a Moral-mender himself, and two of a Trade, "you know, can never agree."

The Authors of *the old Bachelor*, and of the *Relapse*, were those, whom *Collier* most labour'd to convict of Immorality; to which they severally publish'd their Reply; the first seem'd too much hurt, to be able to defend him-



JEREMY COLLIER A.M.



Guilielmus III. D. G. Angliæ, Scotiæ, Franciæ & Hiberniæ Rex &c

J. Kneller Eques ad Vivum Pinxit

W. Faithorne Fecit

Cum Privilegio Regis

Sold by E. Cooper at the 3 Pelicans in Bedford street.

himself, and the other felt him so little, that his Wit only laugh'd at his Lashes.

My first Play of the *Fool in Fashion*, too, being then in a Course of Success; perhaps, for that Reason, only, this severe Author thought himself oblig'd to attack it; in which, I hope, he has shewn more Zeal than Justice, his greatest Charge against it is, that it sometimes uses the Word *Faith*! as an Oath, in the Dialogue: But if *Faith* may as well signify our given Word, or Credit, as our religious Belief, why might not his Charity have taken it, in the less criminal Sense? Nevertheless, Mr. *Collier's* Book, was upon the whole thought so laudable a Work, that King *William*, soon after it was publish'd, granted him a *Nolo Prosequi*, when he stood answerable to the Law, for his having absolved two Criminals, just before they were executed, for High Treason. And it must be farther granted that his calling our Dramatick Writers to this strict Account, had a very wholesome Effect, upon those, who writ after this time. They were now a great deal more upon their guard; Indecencies were no longer Wit; and by degrees the fair Sex came again to fill the Boxes on the first Day of a new Comedy, without Fear or Censure. But the Master of the Revels, who then, licens'd all Plays for the Stage, assisted this Reformation, with a more zealous Severity than ever. He would strike out whole Scenes of a vicious, or immoral Character, tho' it were visibly shewn to be reform'd, or punish'd; a

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severe

severe Instance of this kind of self, may be an Example for all. When *Richard the Third* was first acted by *Shakespeare*, came from his first Act, he expung'd the whole first Act, without saving a Line of it. This extraordinary Stroke at a *Sic volo* occasion may apply to us, for the small Indulgence of a Speech or two, that the other four Acts might limp on, with a little less Absurdity! no! he had not leisure to consider what might be separately offensive. He had an Objection to the whole Act, and the Reason he gave for it was, that the Discreffes of King *Henry the Sixth*, who is kill'd by *Richard* in the first Act, would put weak People too much in mind of King *James* then living in *France*; a notable Proof of his Zeal for the Government! Those who have read either the Play, or the History, I dare say, will think he strain'd hard for the Parallel. In a Word, we were forc'd, for some few Years, to let the Play take its Fate; with only four Acts divided into five; by the Loss of so considerable a Limb; may one not modestly suppose, it was robb'd of at least a fifth Part of that Favour, it afterwards met with? For tho' this first Act was at last recovered, and made the Play whole again, yet the Relief came too late to repay me for the Pains I had taken in it. Nor did I ever hear that this zealous Severity of the Master of the Revels was afterwards thought justifiable. But my good Fortune in Process of time, gave me an Opportunity

severe Instance of this kind falling upon it self, may be an Excuse for my saying so. When *Richard the Third* (as I have it written *Shakespeare*) came from his Exile, to the Stage, he expung'd the whole first Act, without sparing a Line of it. This extraordinary Stroke of a *Sic volo* occasion'd my applying to him, for the small Indulgence of a Speech or two, that the other four Acts might limp on, with a little less Absurdity! no! he had not leisure to consider what might be separately inoffensive. He had an Objection to the whole Act, and the Reason he gave for it was, that the Distresses of King *Henry the Sixth*, who is kill'd by *Richard* in the first Act, would put weak People too much in mind of King *James* then living in *France*; a notable Proof of his Zeal for the Government! Those who have read either the Play, or the History, I dare say, will think he strain'd hard for the Parallel. In a Word, we were forc'd, for some few Years, to let the Play take its Fate; with only four Acts divided into five; by the Loss of so considerable a Limb; may one not modestly suppose, it was robb'd of at least a fifth Part of that Favour, it afterwards met with? For tho' this first Act was at last recovered, and made the Play whole again, yet the Relief came too late to repay me for the Pains I had taken in it. Nor did I ever hear that this zealous Severity of the Master of the Revels was afterwards thought justifiable. But my good Fortune in Process of time, gave me an Opportunity



*Georgius D.G. Mag. Britannia. Franciæ et. Hiberniæ. Rex. Fidei Defensor
Brun. et. Lunn. Dux. S.R.I. Arch. Thesaur. et. Princeps Elector &c. Inauguratus XX die Octobris 1714*

Ab. S.R. Imp. et. Mag. Brit. Baronet: pinx.

Ab. Originali J. Smith Fec. et. ex. 1715

portunity to talk with my Oppressor in my Turn.

The Patent granted by his Majesty King George the First, to Sir *Richard Steele*, and his Assigns, of which I was one, made us sole Judges of what Plays might be proper for the Stage, without submitting them to the Approbation, or Licence of any other particular Person. Notwithstanding which, the Master of the Revels demanded his Fee of Forty Shillings, upon our acting a new One, tho' we had spared him the Trouble of perusing it. This occasion'd my being deputed to him, to enquire into the Right of his Demand, and to make an amicable End of our Dispute. I confess, I did not dislike the Office; and told him, according to my Instructions, That I came not to defend, even our own Right, in prejudice to his; that if our Patent, had inadvertently superseded the Grant of any former Power, or Warrant, whereon he might ground his Pretensions, we would not insist upon our Broad Seal, but would readily answer his Demands upon sight of such his Warrant, any thing in our Patent to the contrary notwithstanding. This I had reason to think he could not do; and, when I found he made no direct Reply to my Question, I repeated it with greater Civilities, and Offers of Compliance, till I was forc'd in the end to conclude, with telling him, That as his Pretensions were not back'd with any visible Instrument of Right, and as his strongest Plea was Custom, we could

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not so far extend our Complaisance, as to continue his Fees upon so slender a Claim to them: And from that Time, neither our Plays, or his Fees, gave either of us any farther trouble. In this Negotiation, I am the bolder to think Justice was on our Side, because the Law lately pass'd, by which the Power of Licensing Plays, &c. is given to a proper Person, is a strong Presumption, that no Law had ever given that Power to any such Person before.

My having mentioned this Law, which so immediately affected the Stage, inclines me to throw out a few Observations upon it: But I must first lead you gradually thro' the Facts, and natural Causes, that made such a Law necessary.

Although it had been taken for granted, from Time immemorial, that no Company of Comedians, could act Plays, &c. without the Royal Licence, or Protection of some legal Authority; a Theatre was, notwithstanding, erected in *Goodman's-Fields*, about seven Years ago, where Plays, without any such Licence, were acted for some time unmolested, and with Impunity. After a Year or two, this Playhouse was thought a Nuisance too near the City: Upon which the Lord-Mayor, and Aldermen, petition'd the Crown to suppress it: What Steps were taken, in favour of that Petition, I know not, but common Fame seem'd to allow from what had, or had not been done in it, that acting Plays in the said Theatre was not evidently unlawful. However,

ever, this Question of Acting without a Licence, a little time after, came to a nearer Decision in *Westminster-Hall*; the Occasion of bringing it thither was this: It happened that the Purchasers of the Patent, to whom Mr. Booth and Myself had sold our Shares, were at variance with the Comedians, that were then left to their Government, and the Variance ended, in the chief of those Comedians deserting, and setting up for themselves in the little House in the *Hay-Market*, in 1733, by which Desertion the Patentees were very much distressed, and considerable Losers. Their Affairs being in this desperate Condition, they were advis'd, to put the Act of the Twelfth of Queen Anne, against Vagabonds, in force, against these Deserters, then acting in the *Hay-Market* without Licence. Accordingly, one of their chief Performers was taken from the Stage, by a Justice of Peace his Warrant, and committed to *Bridewell* as one within the Penalty of the said Act. When the Legality of this Commitment was disputed in *Westminster-Hall*, by all I could observe, from the learned Pleadings on both Sides (for I had the Curiosity to hear them) it did not appear to me, that the Comedian, so committed, was within the Description of the said Act, he being a House-keeper, and having a Vote for the *Westminster* Members of Parliament. He was discharged accordingly, and conducted through the Hall,

with the Congratulations of the Crowds that attended, and wish'd well to his Cause.

The Issue of this Trial threw me, at that time, into a very odd Reflexion, *viz.* That if acting Plays, without Licence, did not make the Performers Vagabonds, unless they wandered from their Habitations so to do, how particular was the Case of Us three late Managing Actors, at the *Theatre-Royal*, who in twenty Years before had paid, upon an Average, at least Twenty Thousand Pounds, to be protected (as Actors) from a Law, that has not since appeared to be against us. Now, whether we might certainly have acted without any Licence at all, I shall not pretend to determine; but this I have, of my own Knowledge, to say, That in Queen *Anne's* Reign, the Stage was in such Confusion, and its Affairs in such Distress, that Sir *John Vanbrugh*, and Mr. *Congreve*, after they had held it about one Year, threw up the Management of it, as an unprofitable Post, after which, a Licence for Acting was not thought worth any Gentleman's asking for, and almost seem'd to go a begging, 'till some time after, by the Care, Application, and Industry of three Actors, it became so prosperous; and the Profits so considerable, that it created a new Place, and a *Sine-cure* of a Thousand Pounds a Year, which the Labour of those Actors constantly paid, to such Persons as had from time to time, Merit or Interest enough, to get their Names
inserted

inserted as Fourth Managers in a Licence with them, for acting Plays, &c. a Preferment, that many a Sir *Francis Wronghead* would have jump'd at. But to go on with my Story. This Endeavour of the Patentees, to suppress the Comedians acting in the *Hay-Market*, proving ineffectual, and no Hopes of a Reunion then appearing, the Remains of the Company left in *Drury-Lane*, were reduced to a very low Condition. At this time a third Purchaser, *Charles Fleetwood, Esq;* stepped in; who judging the best Time to buy was, when the Stock was at the lowest Price, struck up a Bargain at once, for Five Parts in Six of the Patent; and, at the same time, gave the revolted Comedians their own Terms to return, and come under his Government in *Drury-Lane*, where they now continue to act, at very ample Salaries, as I am informed, in 1738. But (as I have observ'd) the late Cause of the persecuted Comedian having gone so strongly in his Favour, and the House in *Goodman's-Fields* too, continuing to act with as little Authority, unmolested; these so tolerated Companies gave Encouragement to a broken Wit, to collect a fourth Company, who, for some time acted Plays in the *Hay-Market*, which House the united *Drury-Lane* Comedians had lately quitted: This enterprising Person, I say (whom I do not chuse to name, unless it could be to his Advantage, or that it were of Importance) had Sense enough to know, that the best Plays, with bad Actors, would turn but to a very

232 *The LIFE of*

poor Account; and therefore found it necessary to give the Publick some Pieces of an extraordinary Kind, the Poetry of which he conceiv'd ought to be so strong, that the greatest Dunce of an Actor could not spoil it: He knew too, that as he was in haste to get Money, it would take up less time to be intrepidly abusive, than decently entertaining; that, to draw the Mob after him, he must rake the Channel, and pelt their Superiors; that, to shew himself somebody, he must come up to *Juvenal's* Advice, and stand the Consequence:

*Aude aliquid brevibus Gyris, & carcere
dignum*

Si vis esse aliquis — Juv. Sat. I.

Such then, was the mettlesome Modesty he set out with; upon this Principle he produc'd several frank, and free Farces, that seem'd to knock all Distinctions of Mankind on the Head: Religion, Laws, Government, Priests, Judges, and Ministers, were all laid flat, at the Feet of this *Herculean* Satyrist! This *Drawcanfir* in Wit, that spared neither Friend nor Foe! who, to make his Poetical Fame immortal, like another *Erostratus*, set Fire to his Stage, by writing up to an Act of Parliament to demolish it. I shall not give the particular Strokes of his Ingenuity a Chance to be remembered, by reciting them; it may be enough to say, in general Terms, they were so openly flagrant, that the Wisdom of the Legislature thought

thought it high time, to take a proper Notice of them.

Having now shewn, by what means there came to be four Theatres, besides a fifth for Operas, in *London*, all open at the same time, and that while they were so numerous, it was evident some of them must have starv'd, unless they fed upon the Trash and Filth of Buffoonry, and Licentiousness; I now come, as I promis'd, to speak of that necessary Law, which has reduced their Number, and prevents the Repetition of such Abuses, in those that remain open, for the publick Recreation.

While this Law was in Debate, a lively Spirit, and uncommon Eloquence was employ'd against it. It was urg'd, That *one* of the greatest Goods we can enjoy, is *Liberty*. (This we may grant to be an incontestable Truth, without its being the least Objection to this Law.) It was said too, That to bring the Stage under the Restraint of a Licensor, was leading the way to an Attack, upon the Liberty of the Press. This amounts but to a Jealousy at best, which I hope, and believe all honest *Englishmen* have as much Reason to think a groundless, as to fear, it is a just Jealousy: For the Stage, and the Press, I shall endeavour to shew, are very different Weapons to wound with. If a great Man could be no more injured, by being personally ridicul'd, or made contemptible, in a Play, than by the same Matter only printed, and read against him, in a Pamphlet, or the strongest

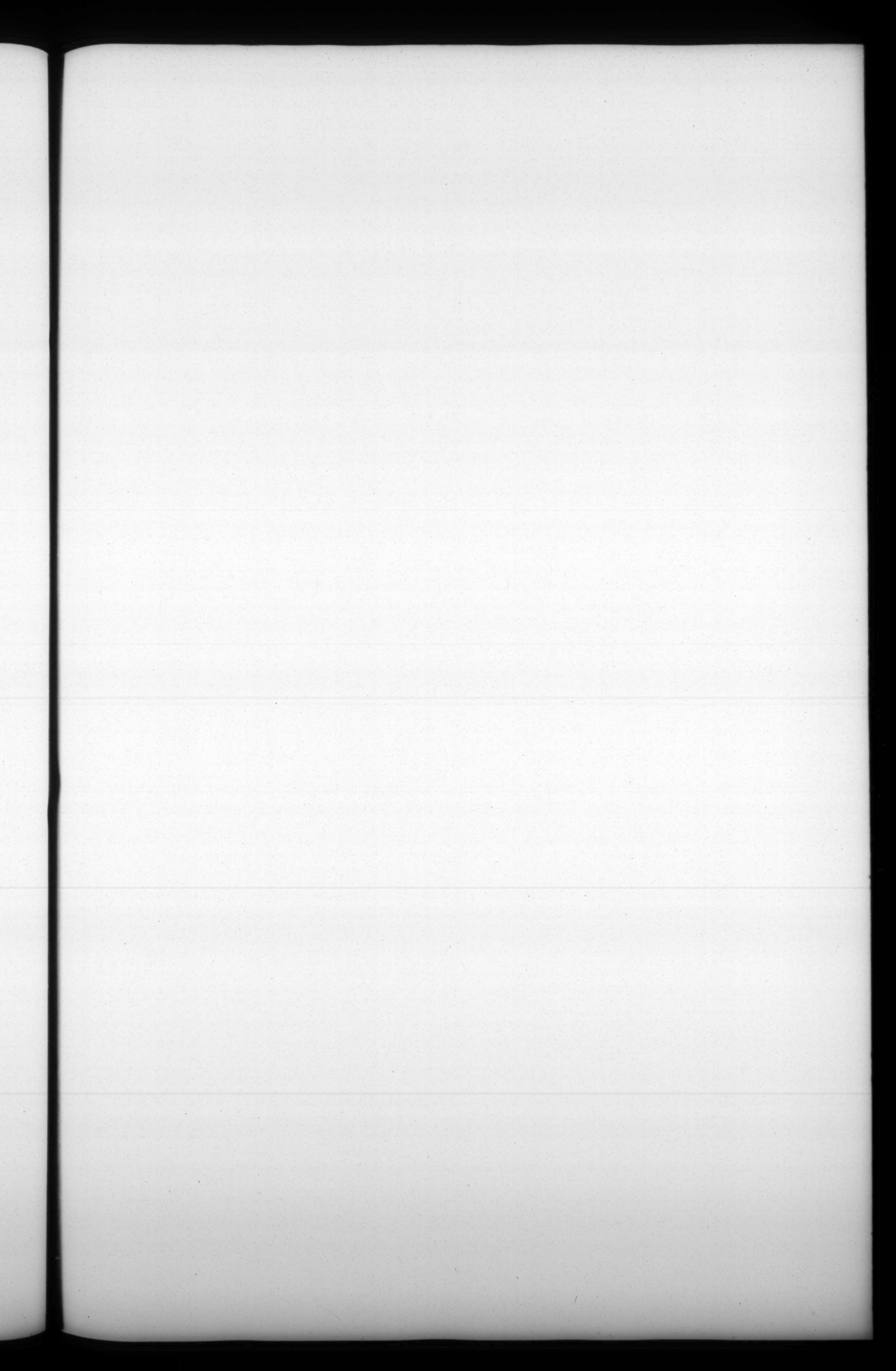
Verse;

Verse; then indeed the Stage, and the Press might pretend, to be upon an equal Foot of Liberty: But when the wide Difference between these two Liberties comes to be explain'd, and consider'd, I dare say we shall find the Injuries from one, capable of being ten times more severe, and formidable, than from the other: Let us see, at least, if the Case will not be vastly alter'd. Read what Mr. Collier, in his *Defence of his Short View of the Stage*, &c. Page 25, says to this Point; he sets this Difference, in a clear Light. These are his Words:

“ The Satyr of a Comedian, and another Poet have a different effect upon Reputation: A Character of Disadvantage, upon the Stage, makes a stronger Impression than elsewhere: Reading is but Hearing at second-hand; now Hearing, at best, is a more languid Conveyance, than Sight. For as Horace observes,

*Segnius irritant animum, demissa per aurem,
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.*

“ The Eye is much more affecting, and strikes deeper into the Memory, than the Ear: Besides, upon the Stage, both the Senses are in Conjunction. The Life of the Actor fortifies the Object, and awakens the Mind to take hold of it.—Thus a dramatic Abuse is rivetted, in the Audience; a Jest is improv'd into Argument, and Rallying grows up into Reason: Thus a Character of Scandal
“ be-





J. Kneller pinx.

J. Verelst Sculp.

The Right Honourable
ROBERT HARLEY  **Earl of OXFORD**
and Earl MORTIMER **Lord HIGH-TREASURER**
of Great Britain in the **Reign of Queen ANNE.**

*A Soul supreme, in each hard Instance try'd,
 Above all Pain, all Passion, and all Pride,* *The rage of Pow'r, the blast of publick Breath,
 The lust of Lucre, and the dread of Death.*

Pope.

“ becomes almost indelible ; a Man goes for
 “ a Blockhead, upon *Content*, and he that is
 “ made a Fool in a Play, is often made one
 “ for his Life. ’Tis true, he passes for such
 “ only among the prejudic’d, and unthinking ;
 “ but these are no inconsiderable Division of
 “ Mankind. For these Reasons, I humbly
 “ conceive, the Stage stands in need of a great
 “ deal of Discipline, and Restraint : To give
 “ them an unlimited Range, is in effect to
 “ make them Masters of all moral Distinc-
 “ tions, and to lay Honour and Religion, at
 “ their Mercy. To shew Greatness ridiculous,
 “ is the way to lose the Use, and abate the
 “ Value of the Quality. Things made little in
 “ jest, will soon be so in earnest ; for Laugh-
 “ ing, and Esteem, are seldom bestow’d on
 “ the same Object.”

If this was Truth, and Reason (as sure it
 was) forty Years ago ; will it not carry the
 same Conviction with it to these Days, when
 there came to be a much stronger Call for a
 Reformation of the Stage, than when this Au-
 thor wrote against it, or perhaps than was ever
 known, since the *English* Stage had a Being ?
 And now let us ask another Question ! Does
 not the general Opinion of Mankind suppose,
 that the Honour, and Reputation of a Mini-
 ster is, or ought to be, as dear to him, as his
 Life ? Yet when the Law, in Queen *Anne*’s
 Time, had made even an unsuccessful Attempt
 upon the Life of a Minister, capital, could
 any Reason be found, that the Fame, and Ho-
 nour

nour of his Character should not be under equal Protection? Was the Wound that *Guiscard* gave to the late Lord *Oxford*, when a Minister, a greater Injury, than the Theatrical Insult which was offer'd to a later Minister, in a more valuable Part, his Character? Was it not as high time, then, to take this dangerous Weapon of mimical Insolence, and Defamation out of the Hands of a mad Poet, as to wrest the Knife from the lifted Hand of a Murderer? And is not that Law of a milder Nature, which *prevents* a Crime, than that which *punishes* it, after it is committed? May not one think it amazing, that the Liberty of defaming lawful Power and Dignity, should have been so eloquently contended for? or especially that this Liberty ought to triumph in a Theatre, where the most able, the most innocent, and most upright Person, must himself be, while the Wound is given, defenceless? How long must a Man so injur'd, lie bleeding, before the Pain and Anguish of his Fame (if it suffers wrongfully) can be dispell'd? Or say, he had deserv'd Reproof, and publick Accusation, yet the Weight and Greatness of his Office, never can deserve it from a publick Stage, where the lowest Malice by sawcy Parallels, and abusive Inuendoes, may do every thing but name him: But alas! Liberty is so tender, so chaste a Virgin, that, it seems, not to suffer her to do irreparable Injuries, with Impunity, is a Violation of her! It cannot sure be a Principle of Liberty, that
would

would turn the Stage into a Court of Enquiry, that would let the partial Applauses of a vulgar Audience give Sentence upon the Conduct of Authority, and put Impeachments into the Mouth of a *Harlequin*? Will not every impartial Man think, that Malice, Envy, Faction, and Mis-rule, might have too much Advantage over lawful Power, if the Range of such a Stage-Liberty were unlimited, and insisted on to be enroll'd among the glorious Rights of an *English* Subject?

I remember much such another ancient Liberty, which many of the good People of *England* were once extremely fond of; I mean that of throwing Squibs, and Crackers, at all Spectators without Distinction, upon a Lord-Mayor's Day; but about forty Years ago a certain Nobleman happening to have one of his Eyes burnt out by this mischievous Merriment, it occasion'd a penal Law, to prevent those sorts of Jest, from being laugh'd at for the future: Yet I have never heard, that the most zealous Patriot ever thought such a Law was the least Restraint upon our Liberty.

If I am ask'd, why I am so voluntary a Champion for the Honour of this Law, that has limited the Number of Play-Houses, and which now can no longer concern me, as a Professor of the Stage? I reply, that it being a Law, so nearly relating to the Theatre, it seems not at all foreign to my History, to have taken notice of it; and as I have farther promised, to give the Publick a true Portrait of my Mind,
I ought

I ought fairly to let them see how far I am, or am not a Blockhead, when I pretend to talk of serious Matters, that may be judg'd so far above my Capacity: Nor will it in the least discompose me, whether my Observations are contemn'd, or applauded. A Blockhead is not always an unhappy Fellow, and if the World will not flatter us, we can flatter ourselves; perhaps too it will be as difficult to convince us, we are in the wrong, as that you wiser Gentlemen are one Tittle the better for your Knowledge. It is yet a Question, with me, whether we weak Heads have not as much Pleasure too, in giving our shallow Reason a little Exercise, as those clearer Brains have, that are allow'd to dive into the deepest Doubts and Mysteries; to reflect, or form a Judgment upon remarkable things *past*, is as delightful to me, as it is to the gravest Politician to penetrate into what is *present*, or to enter into Speculations upon what is, or is not likely to come. Why are Histories written, if all Men are not to judge of them? Therefore, if my Reader has no more to do, than I have, I have a Chance for his being as willing to have a little more upon the same Subject, as I am to give it him.

When direct Arguments against this Bill were found too weak, Recourse was had to dissuasive ones: It was said, that *this Restraint upon the Stage, would not remedy the Evil complain'd of: That a Play refus'd to be licensed, would still be printed, with double Advantage,*

when it should be insinuated, that it was refused, for some Strokes of Wit, &c. and would be more likely, then, to have its Effect, among the People. However natural this Consequence may seem, I doubt it will be very difficult, to give a *printed* Satyr, or Libel, half the Force, or Credit of an *acted* one. The most artful, or notorious Lye, or strain'd Allusion that ever slander'd a great Man, may be read, by some People, with a Smile of Contempt, or at worst, it can impose but on one Person, at once: but when the Words of the same plausible Stuff, shall be repeated on a Theatre, the Wit of it among a Crowd of Hearers, is liable to be over-valued, and may unite, and warm a whole Body of the Malicious, or Ignorant, into a Plaudit; nay, the partial Claps of only *twenty* ill-minded Persons, among several hundreds of silent Hearers, shall, and often have been, mistaken for a general Approbation, and frequently draw into their Party the Indifferent, or Inapprehensive, who rather, than be thought not to understand the Conceit, will laugh, with the Laughers, and join in the Triumph! But alas! the *quiet* Reader of the same ingenious Matter, can only like for *himself*; and the Poison has a much slower Operation, upon the Body of a People, when it is so retail'd out, than when sold to a full Audience by wholesale. the *single* Reader too may happen to be a sensible, or unprejudiced Person; and then the merry Dose meeting with the Antidote of a sound Judgment, perhaps may have no Operation

tion at all: With such a one, the Wit of the most ingenious Satyr, will only, by its intrinsic Truth, or Value, gain upon his Approbation; or if it be worth an Answer, a printed Falshood, may possibly be confounded by printed Proofs against it. But against Contempt, and Scandal heighten'd, and colour'd by the Skill of an *Actor*, ludicrously infusing it into a Multitude, there is no immediate Defence to be made, or equal Reparation to be had for it; for it would be put a poor Satisfaction, at last, after lying long patient, under the Injury, that Time only is to shew (which would probably be the Case) that the Author of it was a desperate Indigent, that did it for Bread. How much less dangerous, or offensive, then, is the *written*, than the *acted* Scandal? The Impression the Comedian giveth to it, is a kind of double Stamp upon the Poet's Paper, that raises it to ten times the intrinsic Value. Might we not strengthen this Argument too, even by the Eloquence, that seem'd to have oppos'd this Law? I will say for my self, at least, that when I came to read the printed Arguments against it, I could scarce believe they were the same, that had amaz'd, and rais'd such Admirations, in me, when they had the Advantage of a lively Elocution, and of that Grace and Spirit, which gave Strength and Lustre to them, in the Delivery!

Upon the whole; if the Stage ought ever to have been reform'd; if to place a Power *somewhere* of restraining its Immoralities, was not inconsistent

inconsistent, with the Liberties of a civiliz'd People (neither of which, sure any moral Man of Sense can dispute) might it not have shewn a Spirit too poorly prejudiced, to have rejected so rational a Law, only because, the Honour, and Office of a Minister might happen, in some small Measure, to be protected by it.

But however little Weight there may be, in the Observations I have made upon it, I shall for my own Part always think them just; unless I should live to see (which I do not expect) some future Set of upright Ministers use their utmost Endeavours to repeal it.

And now we have seen the Consequence of what many People are apt to contend for, Variety of Play-houses! How was it possible so many could honestly subsist, on what was fit to be seen? Their extraordinary Number, of course, reduc'd them to live upon the Gratification of such Hearers, as they knew would be best pleas'd with publick Offence; and publick Offence, of what kind soever, will always be a good Reason for making Laws, to restrain it.

To conclude, let us now consider this Law, in a quite different Light; let us leave the political Part of it quite out of the Question; what Advantage could either the Spectators of Plays, or the Masters of Play-houses have gain'd, by its having never been made? How could the same Stock of Plays supply four Theatres, which (without such additional Entertainments, as a Nation of common Sense

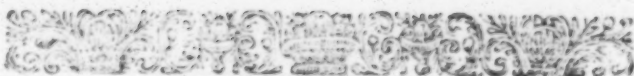
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ought to be ashamed of) could not well support two? Satiety must have been the natural Consequence, of the same Plays being twice as often repeated, as now they need be; and Satiety puts an End to all Tastes, that the Mind of Man can delight in. Had therefore, this Law been made seven Years ago, I should not have parted with my Share in the Patent, under a thousand Pounds more, than I received for it—So that as far as I am able to judge, both the Publick, as Spectators, and the Patentees, as Undertakers, are, or might be, in a way of being better entertain'd, and more considerable Gainers by it.

I now return to the State of the Stage, where I left it, about the Year 1697, from whence this Pursuit of its Immoralities has led me farther than I first design'd to have follow'd it.





C H A P. IX.

A small Apology, for writing on. The different State of the two Companies. Wilks invited over from Dublin. Estcourt, from the same Stage, the Winter following. Mrs. Oldfield's first Admission to the Theatre-Royal. Her Character. The great Theatre in the Hay-Market built, for Betterton's Company. It answers not their Expectation. Some Observations upon it. A Theatrical State Secret.

I NOW begin to doubt, that the *Gayeté du Cœur*, in which I first undertook this Work, may have drawn me, into a more laborious Amusement, than I shall know how to away with: For though I cannot say, I have yet jaded my Vanity, it is not impossible but, by this time, the most candid of my Readers may want a little Breath; especially, when they consider, that all this Load, I have heap'd upon their Patience, contains but seven Years of the forty three I pass'd upon the Stage; the History of which Period I have enjoyn'd myself to transmit to the Judgment (or Oblivion) of Posterity. However, even my Dulness will find somebody to do it right; if my Reader is an ill-natur'd one, he will be as much pleas'd to find me a Duncie in

my old Age, as possibly he may have been, to prove me a brisk Blockhead, in my Youth: But if he has no Gall to gratify, and would (for his simple Amusement) as well know, how the Play-houses went on forty Years ago, as how they do now, I will honestly tell him the rest of my Story, as well as I can. Left therefore the frequent Digressions, that have broke in, upon it, may have entangled his Memory, I must beg leave, just to throw together the Heads of what I have already given him, that he may again recover the Clue of my Discourse.

Let him, then, remember, from the Year 1660 to 1684, the various Fortune of the (then) King's, and Duke's, two famous Companies; their being reduced to one united; the Distinct Characters I have given of thirteen Actors, which in the Year 1690 were the most famous, then, remaining of them; the Cause of their being again divided in 1695, and the Consequences of that Division, 'till 1697; from whence I shall lead them to our Second Union in—Hold! let me see—ay, it was in that memorable Year, when the two Kingdoms of *England* and *Scotland* were made one. And I remember a Particular that confirms me I am right in my Chronology; for the Play of *Hamlet* being acted soon after, *Effcourt*, who then took upon him to say any thing, added a fourth Line to *Shakespear's* Prologue to the Play, in that Play which originally consisted but of three, but *Effcourt* made it run thus:

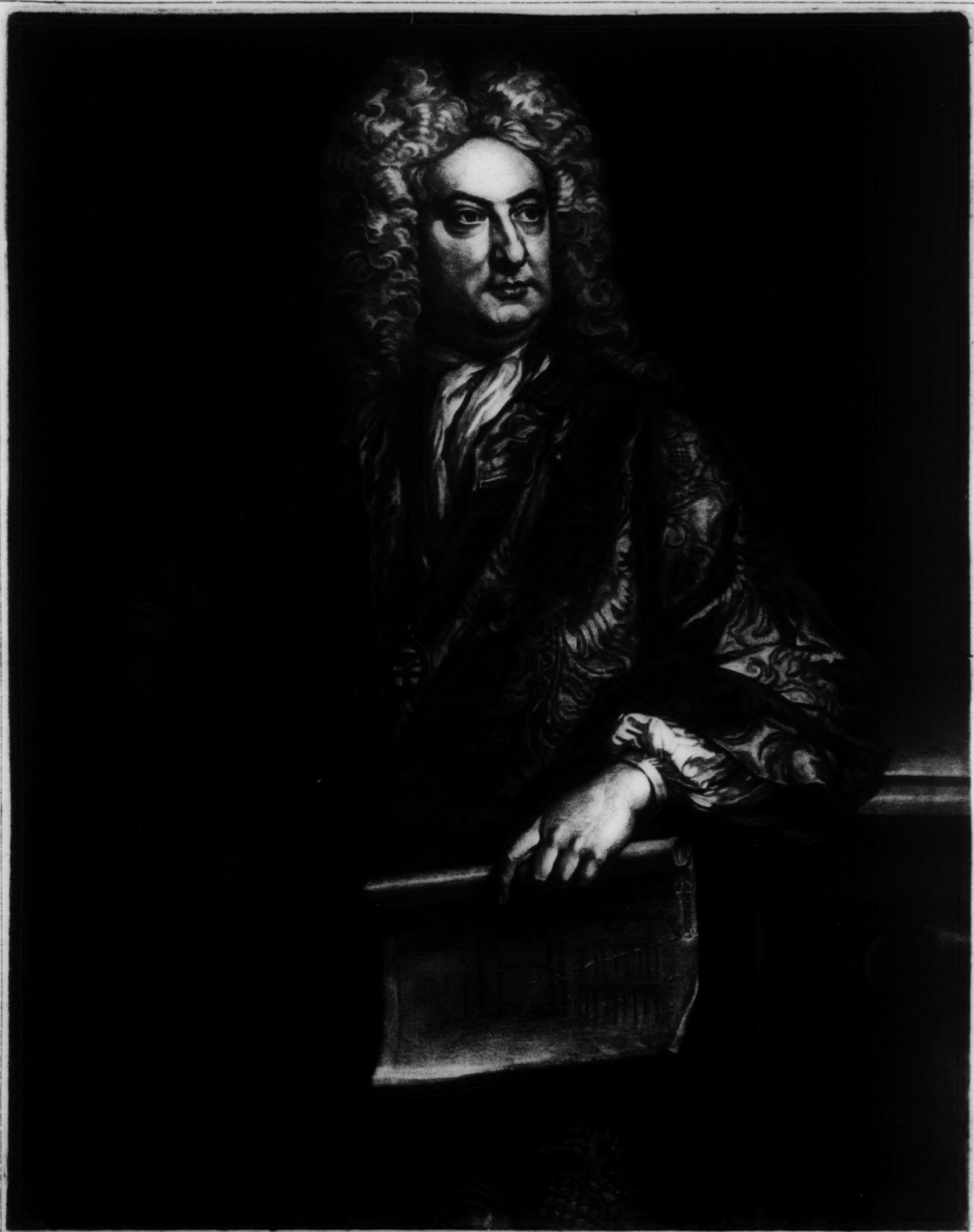
For

*For Us, and for our Tragedy,
Thus stooping to your Clemency,
[This being a Year of Unity,]
We beg your Hearing patiently.*

This new Chronological Line coming unexpectedly upon the Audience, was received with Applause, tho' several grave Faces look'd a little out of Humour at it. However, by this Fact, it is plain, our Theatrical Union happen'd in 1707. But to speak of it, in its Place, I must go a little back again.

From 1697, to this Union, both Companies went on, without any memorable Change in their Affairs, unless it were that *Betterton's* People (however good in their Kind) weremost of them too far advanc'd in Years to mend; and tho' we, in *Drury-Lane*, were too young to be excellent, we were not too old to be better. But what will not Satiety depreciate? For though I must own, and avow, that in our highest Prosperity, I always thought we were greatly their Inferiors; yet, by our good Fortune of being seen in quite new Lights, which several new-written Plays had shewn us in, we now began to make a considerable Stand against them. One good new Play, to a rising Company is of inconceivable Value. In *Oroonoko* (and why may I not name another, tho' it be my own?) in *Love's last Shift*, and in the Sequel of it, the *Relapse*; several of our People shew'd themselves in a new Style of Acting, in which Nature had not as yet been

seen. I cannot here forget a Misfortune that befel our Society, about this time, by the loss of a young Actor, *Hildebrand Horden*, who was kill'd at the Bar of the *Refectory-Tavern*, in a frivolous, rash, accidental Quarrel; for which a late Resident at *Venice*, Colonel *Burgess*, and several other Persons of Distinction, took their Tryals, and were acquitted. This young Man had almost every natural Gift, that could promise an excellent Actor; he had besides, a good deal of Table-wit, and Humour, with a handsome Person, and was every Day rising into publick Favour. Before he was bury'd, it was observable, that two or three Days together, several of the Fair Sex, well dress'd came in Masks (then frequently worn) and some in their own Coaches, to visit this Theatrical Heroe, in his Shroud. He was the elder Son of Dr. *Horden* Minister of *Twickenham*, in *Middlesex*. But this Misfortune was soon repair'd, by the Return of *Wilks*, from *Dublin* (who upon this young Man's Death, was sent for over) and liv'd long enough among us to enjoy that Approbation, from which the other was so unhappily cut off. The Winter following, *Esfcourt*, the famous Mimick, of whom I have already spoken, had the same Invitation from *Ireland*, where he had commenc'd Actor: His first Part here, at the *Theatre-Royal*, was the *Spanish Friar*, in which, tho' he had remembered every Look and Motion of the late *Tony Leigh*, so far as to put the Spectator very much in mind of him; yet it was visible through the whole,



J. Richardson pinx. 1725.

J. Faber scul. 1727.

S^r John Vanbrugh Kn^t
Comptroller of His Maj^{ties} Works & Clarenceux King of Arms.

OB: 26 March 1726 ÆT: 60.



M^{rs} Oldfield
Decus et Deliciae Theatri.

J. Richardson pinx.

J. Simon fec. & Ex.

whole, notwithstanding his Exactness in the Out-lines, the true Spirit, that was to fill up the Figure, was not the same, but unskilfully dawb'd on, like a Child's Painting upon the Face of a *Metzo-tinto*: It was too plain to the judicious, that the Conception was not his own, but imprinted in his Memory, by another, of whom he only presented a dead Likeness. But these were Defects, not so obvious to common Spectators; no wonder, therefore, if by his being much sought after, in private Companies, he met with a sort of Indulgence, not to say Partiality, for what he sometimes did upon the Stage.

In the Year 1699, Mrs. *Oldfield* was first taken into the House, where she remain'd about a Twelvemonth almost a Mute, and unheeded, 'till Sir *John Vanbrugh*, who first recommended her, gave her the Part of *Alinda*, in the *Pilgrim* revis'd. This gentle Character, happily became that want of Confidence which is inseparable from young Beginners, who, without it, seldom arrive to any Excellence: Notwithstanding, I own I was, then, so far deceiv'd in my Opinion of her, that I thought, she had little more than her Person, that appear'd necessary to the forming a good Actress; for she set out with so extraordinary a Diffidence, that it kept her too despondingly down, to a formal, plain (not to say) flat manner of speaking. Nor could the silver Tone of her Voice, 'till after some time, incline my Ear to any Hope, in her favour. But publick Ap-

probation is the warm Weather of a Theatrical Plant, which will soon bring it forward, to whatever Perfection Nature has design'd it. However Mrs. *Oldfield* (perhaps for want of fresh Parts) seem'd to come but slowly forward, 'till the Year 1703. Our Company, that Summer, acted at the *Bath*, during the Residence of *Queen Anne* at that Place. At that time it happen'd, that Mrs. *Verbruggen*, by reason of her last Sickness (of which she some few Months after, dy'd) was left in *London*; and though most of her Parts were, of course, to be dispos'd of, yet so earnest was the Female Scramble for them, that only one of them fell to the Share of Mrs. *Oldfield*, that of *Leonora*, in *Sir Courtly Nice*; a Character of good plain Sense, but not over elegantly written. It was in this Part Mrs. *Oldfield* surpris'd me into an Opinion of her having all the innate Powers of a good Actress, though they were yet, but in the Bloom of what they promis'd. Before she had acted this Part, I had so cold an Expectation from her Abilities, that she could scarce prevail with me, to rehearse with her the Scenes, she was chiefly concern'd in, with *Sir Courtly*, which I then acted. However, we ran them over, with a mutual Inadvertency of one another. I seem'd careless, as concluding, that any Assistance I could give her, would be to little, or no purpose; and she mutter'd out her Words in a sort of misty manner, at my low Opinion of her. But when the Play came to be acted, she had
a just

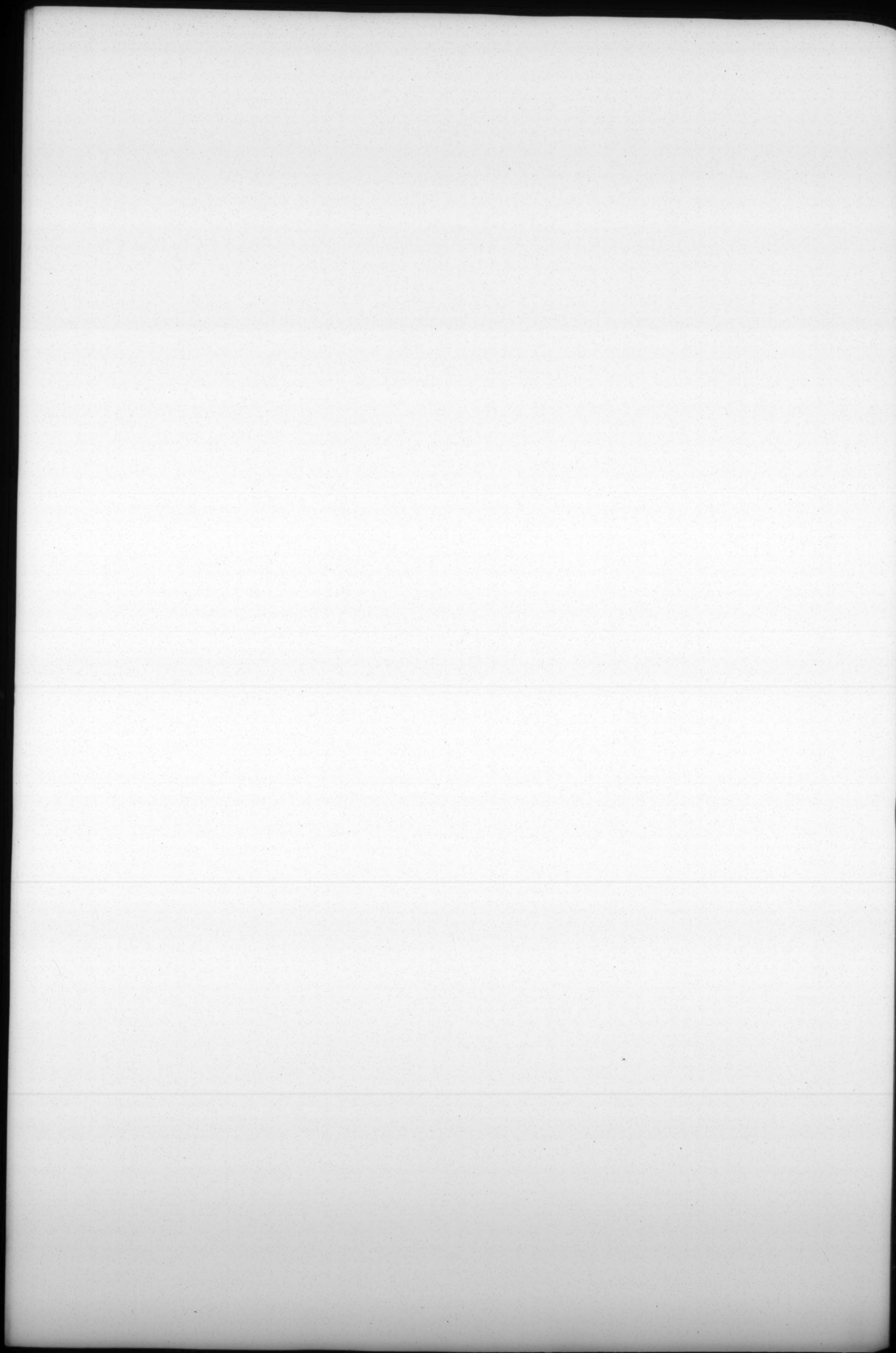


J. Kneller pinxit.

At Kensington Palace.

Impressa J. & R. Kington London, Mar. 25. 1714.

J. Houbraken sculp. Amst. 1714.



a just Occasion to triumph over the Error of my Judgment, by the (almost) Amazement, that her unexpected Performance awak'd me to; so forward, and sudden a Step into Nature, I had never seen; and what made her Performance more valuable, was, that I knew it all proceeded from her own Understanding, untaught, and unassisted by any one more experienc'd Actor. Perhaps it may not be unacceptable, if I enlarge a little more upon the Theatrical Character of so memorable an Actress.

Though this Part of *Leonora* in itself, was of so little value, that when she got more into Esteem, it was one of the several she gave away, to inferior Actresses; yet it was the first (as I have observ'd) that corrected my Judgment of her, and confirm'd me, in a strong Belief, that she could not fail, in very little time, of being what she was afterwards allow'd to be, the foremost Ornament of our Theatre. Upon this unexpected Sally, then, of the Power, and Disposition, of so unforeseen an Actress, it was, that I again took up the two first Acts of the *Careless Husband*, which I had written the Summer before, and had thrown aside, in despair of having Justice done to the Character of Lady *Betty Modish*, by any one Woman, then among us; Mrs. *Verbruggen* being now in a very declining State of Health, and Mrs. *Bracegirdle* out of my Reach, and engag'd in another Company: But, as I have said, Mrs. *Oldfield* having thrown out such
new

new Proffers of a Genius, I was no longer at a loss for Support; my Doubts were dispell'd, and I had now a new Call to finish it: Accordingly, the *Careless Husband* took its Fate upon the Stage, the Winter following, in 1704. Whatever favourable Reception, this Comedy has met with from the Publick; it would be unjust in me, not to place a large Share of it to the Account of Mrs. *Oldfield*; not only from the uncommon Excellence of her Action; but even from her personal manner of Converſing. There are many Sentiments in the Character of Lady *Betty Medish*, that I may almost say, were originally her own, or only dress'd with a little more care, than when they negligently fell, from her lively Humour: Had her Birth plac'd her in a higher Rank of Life, she had certainly appear'd, in reality, what in this Play she only, excellently, acted, an agreeably gay Woman of Quality, a little too conscious of her natural Attractions. I have often seen her, in private Societies, where Women of the best Rank might have borrow'd some part of her Behaviour, without the least Diminution of their Sense, or Dignity. And this very Morning, where I am now writing at the Bath; November 11, 1738, the same Words were said of her, by a Lady of Condition, whose better Judgment of her Personal Merit, in that Light, has embolden'd me to repeat them. After her Success, in this Character of higher Life; all that Nature had given her of the Actress, seem'd to have risen to its full Perfection:

fection: But the Variety of her Power could not be known 'till she was seen, in variety of Characters; which, as fast as they fell to her, she equally excell'd in. Authors had much more, from her Performance, than they had reason to hope for, from what they had written for her; and none had less than another, but as their Genius in the Parts they allotted her, was more or less elevated.

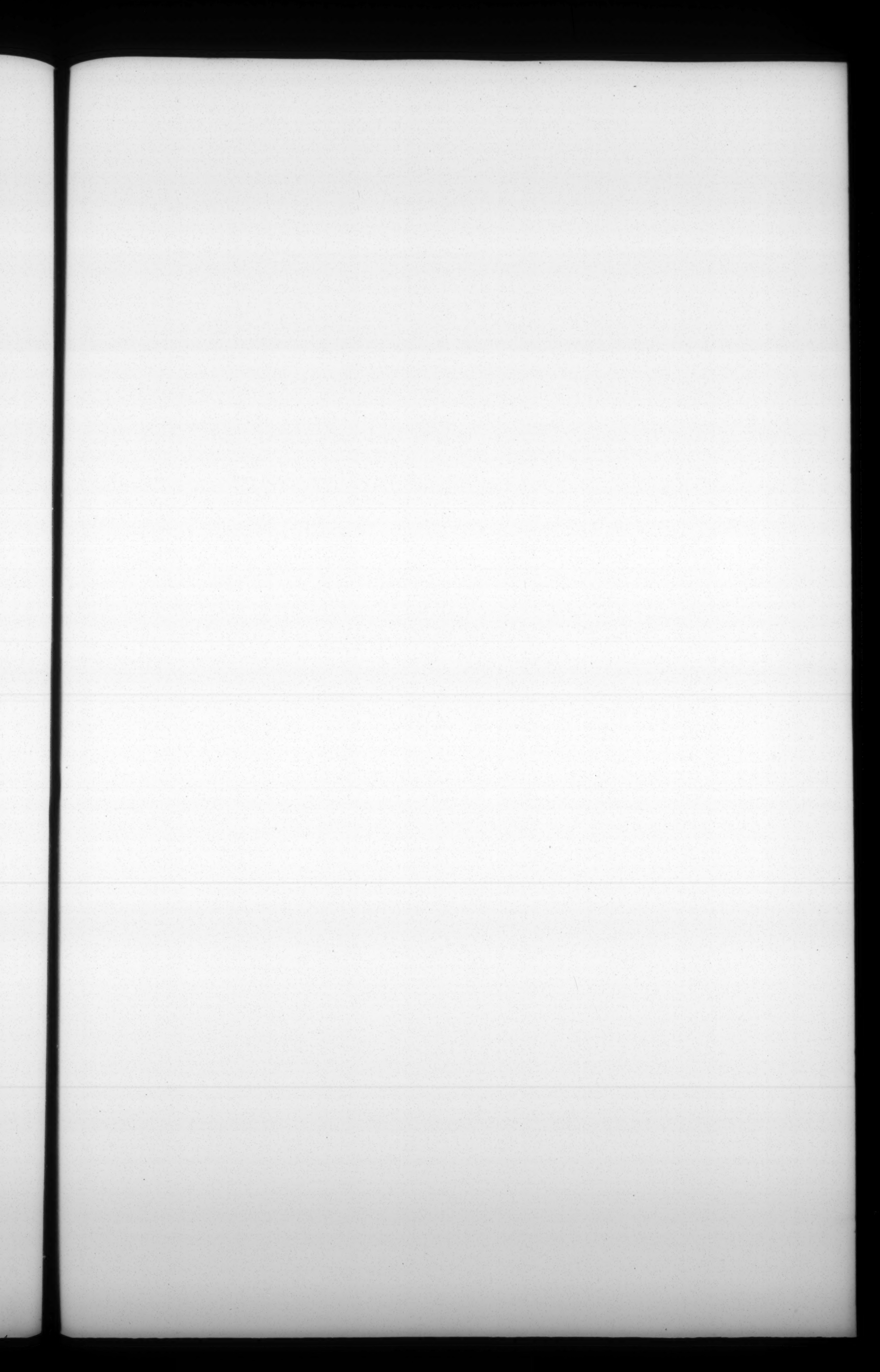
In the Wearing of her Person, she was particularly fortunate; her Figure was always improving, to her thirty-sixth Year; but her Excellence in acting was never at a stand: And the last new Character she shone in (*Lady Townly*) was a Proof that she was still able to do more, if more could have been done for her. She had one Mark of good Sense, rarely known, in any Actor of either Sex, but herself. I have observ'd several, with promising Dispositions, very desirous of Instruction at their first setting out; but no sooner had they found their least Account, in it, than they were, as desirous of being left to their own Capacity, which they, then, thought would be disgrac'd, by their seeming to want any further Assistance. But this was not Mrs. *Oldfield's* way of thinking; for to the last Year of her Life, she never undertook any Part she lik'd, without being importunately desirous of having all the Helps in it, that another could possibly give her. By knowing so much herself, she found how much more there was of Nature, yet needful to be known. Yet it was a hard matter to give her
any

any Hint, that she was not able to take, or improve. With all this Merit, she was tractable, and less presuming, in her Station, than several, that had not half her Pretensions to be troublesome: But she lost nothing by her easy Conduct; she had every thing she ask'd, which she took care should be always reasonable, because she hated as much to be *grudg'd*, as *deny'd* a Civility. Upon her extraordinary Action in the *Provok'd Husband*, the Managers made her a Present of Fifty Guineas more than her Agreement, which never was more than a Verbal one; for they knew she was above deserting them, to engage upon any other Stage, and she was conscious, they would never think it their Interest, to give her cause of Complaint. In the last two Months of her Illness, when she was no longer able to assist them, she declin'd received her Salary, tho' by her Agreement, she was entitled to it. Upon the whole, she was, to the last Scene she acted, the Delight of her Spectators: Why then may we not close her Character, with the same Indulgence with which *Horace* speaks of a commendable Poem:

*Ubi plura nitent—non ego paucis
Offendor maculis—*

*Where in the whole, such various Beauties shine,
'Twere idle, upon Errors, to refine.*

What more might be said of her as an Actress,
may





B. Van Gucht pinx.

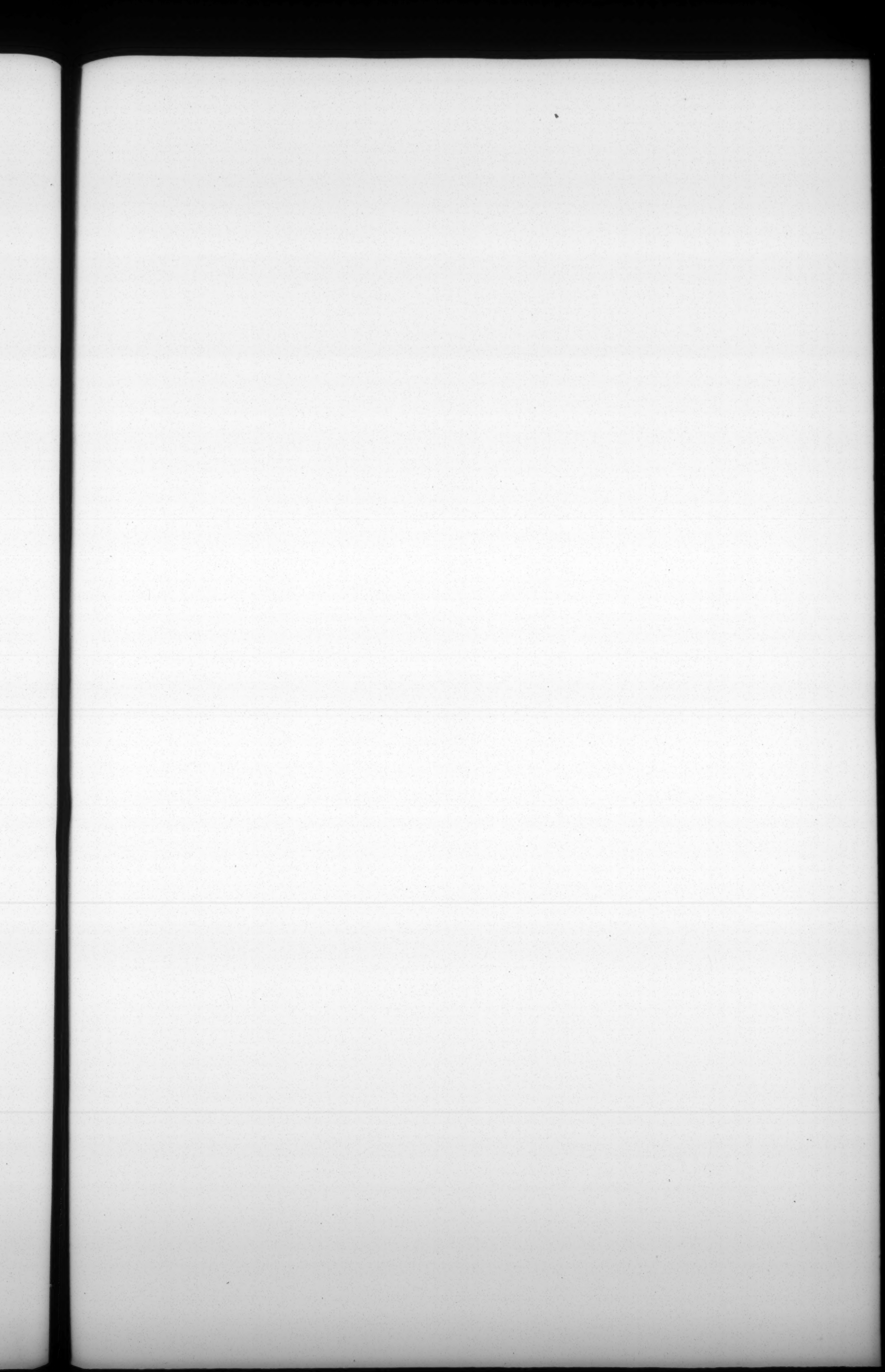
J. Saunders fecit

Published as the Act Directs Decem^r. 17th 1773 by J. Saunders N^o. 17 Glanville Street Rathbone Place.

may be found in the Preface to the *Provok'd Husband*, to which I refer the Reader.

With the Acquisition, then, of so advanc'd a Comedian as Mrs. *Oldfield*, and the Addition of one so much in Favour as *Wilks*, and by the visible Improvement of our other Actors as *Penkethman*, *Johnson*, *Bullock*, and I think I may venture to name myself in the Number (but, in what Rank, I leave to the Judgment of those who have been my Spectators) the Reputation of our Company began to get ground; Mrs. *Oldfield*, and Mr. *Wilks*, by their frequently playing against one another, in our best Comedies, very happily supported that Humour, and Vivacity, which is so peculiar to our *English* Stage. The *French*, our only modern Competitors, seldom give us their Lovers in such various Lights: In their Comedies (however lively a People they are by nature) their Lovers are generally constant, simple Sighers, both of a Mind, and equally distress'd, about the Difficulties of their coming together; which naturally makes their Conversation so serious, that they are seldom good Company to their Auditors: And tho' I allow them many other Beauties, of which we are too negligent; yet our Variety of Humour has Excellencies that all their valuable Observance of Rules have never yet attain'd to. By these Advantages, then, we began to have an equal Share of the politer sort of Spectators, who, for several Years, could not allow our Company to stand in any comparison, with

the other. But Theatrical Favour, like Public Commerce, will sometimes deceive the best Judgments, by an unaccountable change of its Channel; the best Commodities are not always known to meet with the best Markets. To this Decline of the Old Company, many Accidents might contribute; as the too distant Situation of their Theatre; or their want of a better, for it was not, then in the condition it now is; but small, and poorly fitted up, within the Walls of a Tennis *Quaree* Court, which is of the lesser fort. *Booth*, who was then a young Actor, among them, has often told me of the Difficulties *Betterton*, then, labour'd under, and complain'd of: How impracticable he found it, to keep their Body to that common Order, which was necessary for their Support; of their relying too much upon their intrinsic Merit; and though but few of them were young, even when they first became their own Masters, yet they were all now, ten Years older, and consequently more liable to fall into an inactive Negligence, or were only separately diligent, for themselves, in the sole Regard of their Benefit-Plays; which several of their Principals, knew, at worst, would raise them Contributions, that would more than tolerably subsist them, for the current Year. But as these were too precarious Expedients, to be always depended upon, and brought in nothing to the general Support of the Numbers, who were at Salaries under them; they were reduc'd to have recourse to
foreign





Nicholas Rowe Esq. P.L.

J. Fisher Sculpsit & Excudit. 1715.

foreign Novelties; *L'Abbè, Balon*, and *Mademoiselle Subligny*, three of the, then, most famous Dancers of the *French Opera*, were, at several times, brought over at extraordinary Rates, to revive that sickly Appetite, which plain Sense, and Nature had satiated. But alas! there was no recovering to a sound Constitution, by those mere costly Cordials; the Novelty of a Dance was but of a short Duration, and perhaps hurtful, in its consequence; for it made a Play without a Dance, less endur'd than it had been before, when such Dancing was not to be had. But perhaps, their exhibiting these Novelties, might be owing to the Success we had met with, in our more barbarous introducing of *French Mimicks*, and *Tumblers*, the Year before; of which *Mr. Rowe*, thus complains in his Prologue to one of his first Plays:

*Must Shakespear, Fletcher, and laborious Ben,
Be left for Scaramouch, and Halequin?*

While the Crowd, therefore, so fluctuated, from one House, to another, as their Eyes were more, or less regaled, than their Ears, it could not be a Question much in Debate, which had the better Actors; the Merit of either, seem'd to be of little moment; and the Complaint in the foregoing Lines, tho' it might be just, for a time, could not be a just one for ever; because the best Play that ever was writ, may tire by being too often repeated, a Misfortune naturally attending the Obliga-

tion, to play every Day; not that whenever such Satiety commences, it will be any Proof of the Play's being a bad one, or of its being ill acted. In a word, Satiety is, seldom enough consider'd, by either Criticks, Spectators, or Actors, as the true, not to say just Cause of declining Audiences, to the most rational Entertainments: And tho' I cannot say, I ever saw a good new Play, not attended with due Encouragement, yet to keep a Theatre daily open, without sometimes giving the Publick a bad old one, is more than, I doubt, the Wit of human Writers, or Excellence of Actors, will ever be able to accomplish. And, as both Authors, and Comedians, may have often succeeded, where a sound Judgment would have condemn'd them, it might puzzle the nicest Critick living, to prove in what sort of Excellence, the true Value of either consisted: For, if their Merit were to be measur'd by the full Houses, they may have brought; if the Judgment of the Crowd were infallible; I am afraid we shall be reduc'd to allow, that the *Beggar's Opera* was the best-written Play, and Sir *Harry Wildair* (as *Wilks* play'd it) was the best acted Part, that ever our *English* Theatre had to boast of. That Critick indeed, must be rigid, to a Folly, that would deny either of them, their due Praise, when they severally drew such Numbers after them; all their Hearers could not be mistaken; and yet if they were all in the right, what sort of Fame will remain to those celebrated

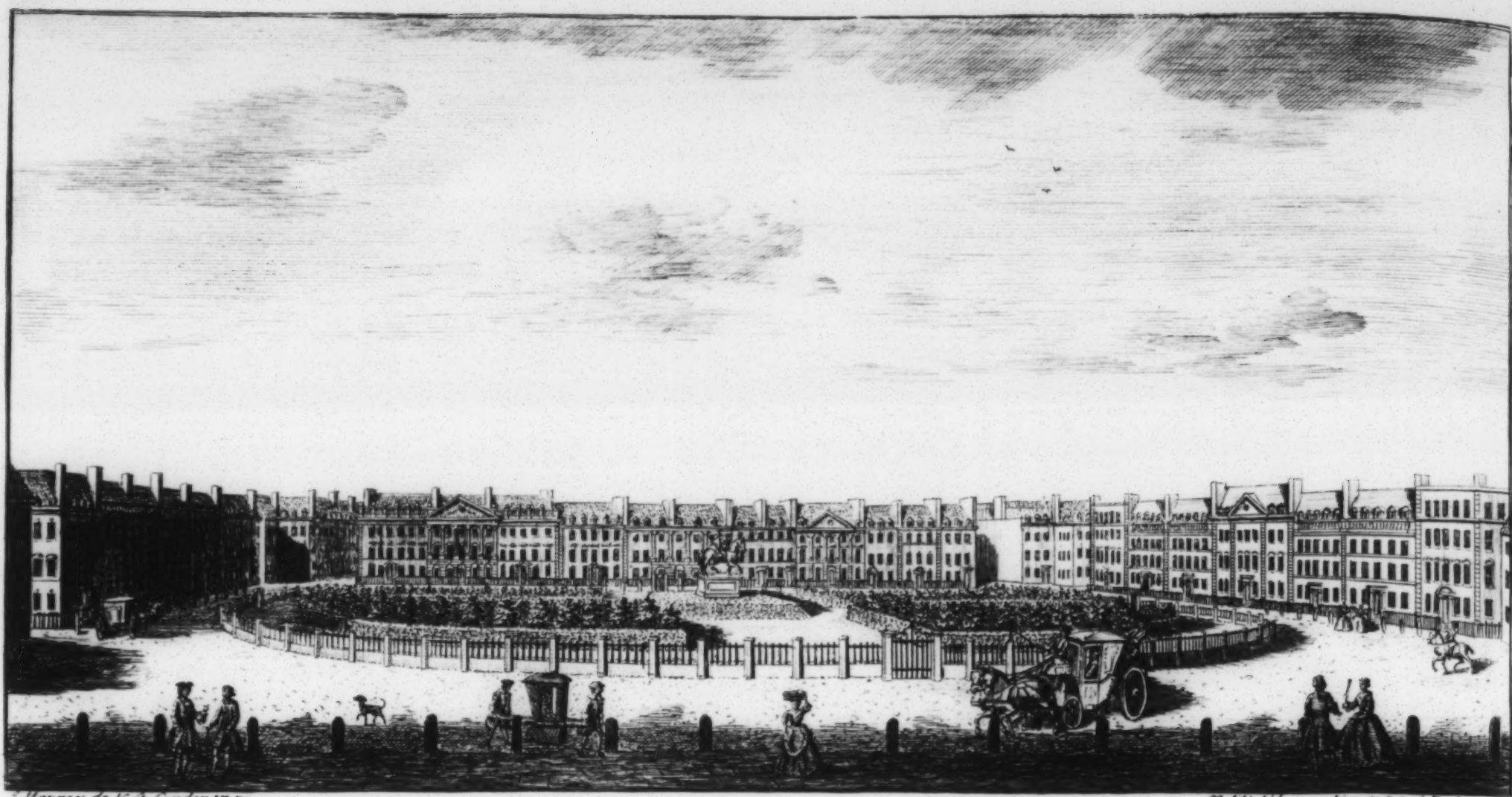
Authors,

Authors, and Actors, that had so long, and deservedly been admired, before these were in Being. The only Distinction I shall make between them is, That to write, or act, like the Authors, or Actors, of the latter end of the last Century, I am of Opinion, will be found a far better Pretence to Success, than to imitate these who have been so crowded to, in the beginning of this. All I would infer from this Explanation, is, that tho' we had, then, the better Audiences, and might have more of the young World on our Side; yet this was no sure Proof, that the other Company were not, in the Truth of Action, greatly our Superiors. These elder Actors, then, besides the Disadvantages I have mention'd, having only the fewer, true Judges to admire them, naturally wanted the Support of the Crowd, whose Taste was to be pleas'd at a cheaper Rate, and with coarser Fare. To recover them therefore, to their due Estimation, a new Project was form'd, of building them a stately Theatre, in the *Hay-Market*, by Sir *John Vanbrugh*, for which he rais'd a Subscription of thirty Persons of Quality, at one hundred Pounds each, in Consideration whereof every Subscriber, for his own Life, was to be admitted, to whatever Entertainments should be publickly perform'd there, without farther Payment for his Entrance. Of this Theatre, I saw the first Stone laid, on which was inscrib'd *The little Whig*, in Honour to a Lady of extraordinary
S Beauty,

Beauty, then the celebrated Toast, and Pride of that Party.

In the Year 1706, when this House was finish'd, *Betterton*, and his Co-partners dissolved their own Agreement, and threw themselves under the Direction of Sir *John Vanbrugh*, and Mr. *Congreve*; imagining, perhaps, that the Conduct of two such eminent Authors, might give a more prosperous Turn to their Condition; that the Plays, it would, now, be their Interest, to write for them, would soon recover the Town to a true Taste, and be an Advantage, that no other Company could hope for; that in the Interim till such Plays could be written, the Grandeur of their House, as it was a new Spectacle, might allure the Crowd to support them: But if these were their Views, we shall see, that their Dependence upon them, was too sanguine. As to their Prospect of new Plays, I doubt it was not enough consider'd, that good ones were Plants of a slow Growth; and tho' Sir *John Vanbrugh* had a very quick Pen, yet Mr. *Congreve* was too judicious a Writer, to let any thing come hastily out of his Hands: As to their other Dependence, the House, they had not yet discover'd, that almost every proper Quality, and Convenience of a good Theatre had been sacrificed, or neglected, to shew the Spectator a vast, triumphal Piece of Architecture! And that the best Play, for the Reasons I am going to offer, could not but be under great Disadvantages, and be less capable of delighting





J. Mawer de & Co London 1759.

Published according to Act of Parliament

A Perspective View of Grosvenor Square.

Vue de la Place de Grosvenor



lighting the Auditor, here, than it could have been in the plain Theatre they came from. For what could their vast Columns, their gilded Cornices, their immoderate high Roofs avail, when scarce one Word in ten, could be distinctly heard in it? Nor had it, then, the Form, it now stands in, which Necessity, two or three Years after, reduced it to: At the first opening it, the flat Ceiling, that is now over the Orchestre, was then a Semi-oval Arch, that sprung fifteen Feet higher from above the Cornice: The Ceiling over the Pit too, was still more raised, being one level Line from the highest back part of the upper Gallery, to the Front of the Stage: The Front-boxes were a continued Semicircle, to the bare Walls of the House on each Side: This extraordinary, and superfluous Space occasion'd such an Undulation, from the Voice of every Actor, that generally what they said sounded like the Gabbling of so many People, in the lofty Isles in a Cathedral—The Tone of a Trumpet, or the Swell of an Eunuch's holding Note, 'tis true, might be sweeten'd by it; but the articulate Sounds of a speaking Voice were drown'd, by the hollow Reverberations of one Word upon another. To this Inconvenience, why may we not add that of its Situation; for at that time it had not the Advantage of almost a large City, which has since been built, in its Neighbourhood: Those costly Spaces of *Hanover*, *Grosvenor*, and *Cavendish* Squares, with the many, and great adjacent Streets about them,

were then all but so many green Fields of Pasture, from whence they could draw little, or no Sustenance, unless it were that of a Milk-Diet. The City, the Inns of Court, and the middle Part of the Town, which were the most constant Support of a Theatre, and chiefly to be relied on, were now too far, out of the Reach of an easy Walk; and Coach-hire is often too hard a Tax, upon the Pit, and Gallery. But from the vast Increase of the Buildings I have mention'd, the Situation of that Theatre has since that Time received considerable Advantages; a new World of People of Condition are nearer to it, than formerly, and I am of Opinion, that if the auditory Part were a little more reduced to the Model of that in *Drury-Lane*, an excellent Company of Actors would, now, find a better Account in it, than in any other House in this populous City: Let me not be mistaken, I say, an excellent Company, and such as might be able to do Justice to the best of Plays, and throw out those latent Beauties in them, which only excellent Actors can discover, and give Life to. If such a Company were now there, they would meet with a quite different Set of Auditors, than other Theatres have lately been used to: Polite Hearers would be content with polite Entertainments; and I remember the time, when Plays, without the Aid of Farce, or Pantomime, were as decently attended as Opera's, or private Assemblies, where a noisy Sloven would have past his time as uneasily, in a
Front-

Front-box, as in a Drawing-room; when a Hat upon a Man's Head there would have been look'd upon, as a sure Mark of a Brute, or a Booby: But of all this I have seen too, the Reverse, where in the Presence of Ladies, at a Play, common Civility has been set at defiance, and the Privilege of being a rude Clown, even to a Nuisance, has, in a manner been demanded, as one of the Rights of *English* Liberty: Now, though I grant, that Liberty is so precious a Jewel, that we ought not to suffer the least Ray of its Lustre, to be diminish'd; yet methinks the Liberty of seeing a Play, in quiet, has as laudable a Claim to Protection, as the Privilege of not suffering you to do it, has to Impunity. But since we are so happy, as not to have a certain Power among us, which, in another Country, is call'd the *Police*, let us rather bear this Insult, than buy its Remedy at too dear a Rate; and let it be the Punishment of such wrong-headed Savages, that they never will, or can know the true Value of that Liberty, which they so stupidly abuse: Such vulgar Minds possess their Liberty, as profligate Husbands do fine Wives, only to disgrace them. In a Word, when Liberty boils over, such is the Scum of it. But to our new erected Theatre.

Not long before this Time, the *Italian* Opera began first to steal into *England*; but in as rude a disguise, and unlike itself, as possible; in a lame, hobling Translation, into our own Language, with false Quantities, or Metre out

of Measure, to its original Notes, sung by our own unskilful Voices, with Graces misapply'd to almost every Sentiment, and with Action, lifeless and unmeaning, through every Character: The first *Italian* Performer, that made any distinguish'd Figure in it, was *Valentini*, a true sensible Singer, at that time, but of a Throat too weak, to sustain those melodious Warblings, for which the fairer Sex have since idoliz'd his Successors. However, this Defect was so well supply'd by his Action, that his Hearers bore with the Absurdity of his singing his first Part of *Turnus* in *Camilla*, all in *Italian*, while every other Character was sung and recited to him in *English*. This I have mention'd to shew not only our *Tramontane* Taste, but that the crowded Audiences, which follow'd it to *Drury-Lane*, might be another Occasion of their growing thinner in *Lincoln-Inn-Fields*.

To strike in, therefore, with this prevailing Novelty, Sir *John Vanbrugh*, and Mr. *Congreve*, open'd their new *Hay-Market Theatre*, with a translated Opera, to *Italian* Musick, call'd the *Triumph of Love*, but this not having in it, the Charms of *Camilla*, either from the Inequality of the Musick, or Voices, had but a cold Reception, being perform'd but three Days, and those not crowded. Immediately, upon the Failure of this Opera, Sir *John Vanbrugh* produced his Comedy call'd the *Confederacy*, taken (but greatly improv'd) from the *Bourgeois à la mode* of *Dancour*: Though the
Fate





MOLIERE.

Fate of this Play was something better, yet I thought it was not equal to its Merit: For it is written with an uncommon Vein of Wit and Humour; which confirms me, in my former Observation, that the Difficulty of hearing distinctly in that, then wide Theatre, was no small Impediment to the Applause, that might have followed the same Actors in it, upon every other Stage; and indeed every Play acted there, before the House was alter'd, seem'd to suffer from the same Inconvenience: In a Word, the Prospect of Profits, from this Theatre was so very barren, that Mr. Congreve, in a few Months, gave up his Share and Interest in the Government of it, wholly to Sir John Vanbrugh. But Sir John being sole Proprietor of the House was at all Events, oblig'd to do his utmost to support it. As he had a happier Talent of throwing the *English* Spirit into his Translation of *French* Plays, than any former Author, who had borrowed from them, he, in the same Season, gave the Publick three more of that kind, call'd the *Cuckold in Conceit*; from the *Cocu imaginaire* of Moliere; *Squire Trelooby*, from his *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*, and the *Mistake*, from the *D'epit Amoureux* of the same Author. Yet all these, however well executed, came to the Ear in the same undistinguish'd Utterance, by which almost all their Plays had equally suffer'd: For, what few could plainly hear, it was not likely a great many could applaud.

It must farther be consider'd too, that this Company were not now, what they had been, when they first revolted from the Patentees in *Drury-Lane*, and became their own Masters, in *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields*. Several of them, excellent in their different Talents, were now dead; as *Smith*, *Kynaston*, *Sandford*, and *Leigh*: Mrs. *Betterton*, and *Underbil* being, at this time, also superannuated Pensioners, whose Places were generally but ill supply'd: Nor could it be expected that *Betterton* himself, at past seventy, could retain his former Force, and Spirit; though he was yet far distant from any Competitor. Thus then were these Remains of the best Set of Actors, that I believe were ever known, at once in *England*, by Time, Death, and the Satiety of their Hearers mould'ring to decay.

It was, now, the Town-talk, that nothing but a Union of the two Companies, could recover the Stage, to its former Reputation, which Opinion was certainly true: One would have thought too, that the Patentee of *Drury-Lane* could not have fail'd to close with it, he being, then, on the Prosperous Side of the Question, having no Relief to ask for himself, and little more to do in the matter, than to consider what he might safely grant: But it seems this was not his way of counting; he had other Persons, who had great Claims to Shares in the Profits of this Stage, which Profits, by a Union, he foresaw would be too visible, to be doubted of, and might raise up a

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new

new Spirit, in those Adventurers, to revive their Suits at Law with him; for he had led them a Chace in Chancery several Years, and when they had driven him, into a Contempt of that Court, he conjur'd up a Spirit, in the Shape of Six and eight Pence a-day, that constantly struck the Tipstaff blind, whenever he came near him: He knew the intrinsic Value of Delay, and was resolv'd to stick to it, as the surest way to give the Plaintiffs enough on't. And by this Expedient our good Master had long walk'd about, at his Leisure, cool, and contented, as a Fox, when the Hounds were drawn off, and gone home from him. But whether I am right, or not in my Conjectures, certain it is, that this close Master of *Drury-Lane*, had no Inclination to a Union, as will appear by the Sequel.

Sir *John Vanbrugh* knew too, that to make a Union worth his while, he must not seem too hasty for it, he therefore found himself under a Necessity, in the mean time, of letting his whole Theatrical Farm to some industrious Tenant, that might put it into better Condition. This is that Crisis, as I observed, in the Eighth Chapter, when the Royal Licence, for acting Plays, &c. was judg'd of so little Value, as not to have one Suitor for it. At this time then, the Master of *Drury-Lane* happen'd to have a sort of premier Agent, in his Stage-Affairs, that seem'd in Appearance as much to govern the Master, as the Master himself did to govern his Actors: But this Person was under

der no Stipulation, or Sallary, for the Service he render'd; but had gradually wrought himself into the Master's extraordinary Confidence and Trust, from an habitual Intimacy, a cheerful Humour, and an indefatigable Zeal for his Interest. If I should farther say, that this Person has been well known in almost every Metropolis, in *Europe*; that few private Men have, with so little Reproach, run through more various Turns of Fortune; that, on the wrong side of Three-score, he has yet the open Spirit of a hale young Fellow of five and twenty; that though he still chuses to speak what he thinks, to his best Friends, with an undisguis'd Freedom, he is, notwithstanding acceptable to many Persons of the first Rank, and Condition; that any one of them (provided he likes them) may now send him, for their Service, to *Constantinople*, at half a Day's Warning; that Time has not, yet, been able to make a visible Change in any Part of him, but the Colour of his Hair, from a fierce coal-black, to that of a milder milk-white: When I have taken this Liberty with him, methinks it cannot be taking a much greater, if I at once should tell you, that this Person was Mr. *Owen Swiney*, and that it was to him Sir *John Vanbrugh*, in this Exigence of his Theatrical Affairs, made an Offer of his Actors, under such Agreements of Sallary, as might be made with them; and of his House, Cloaths, and Scenes, with the Queen's License to employ them, upon Payment of only the casual Rent of five Pounds,
upon



Peter Van Bleeck Pinx. 1737.

FB. F. 1749

Quen. M. Swiny Esq.

upon every acting Day, and not to exceed 700*l.* in the Year. Of this Propofal, Mr. *Swiney* defir'd a Day or two, to confider; for however he might like it, he would not meddle in any fort, without the Consent, and Approbation of his Friend, and Patron, the Mafter of *Drury Lane*. Having given the Reafons why this Patentee was averfe to a Union, it may now feem lefs a Wonder, why he immediately confented that *Swiney* fhould take the *Hay-Market* Houfe, &c. and continue that Company to act againft him; but the real Truth was, that he had a mind both Companies fhould be clandestinely under one and the fame Intereft; and yet in fo loofe a manner, that he might declare his Verbal Agreement with *Swiney* good, or null, and void, as he might beft find his Account in either. What flatter'd him, that he had this wholfom Project, and *Swiney* to execute it, both in his Power, was, that, at this time, *Swiney* happen'd to ftand in his Books, Debtor to Cash, upwards of Two Hundred Pounds: But here, we fhall find, he over-rated his Security. However, *Swiney* as yet follow'd his Orders; he took the *Hay-Market* Theatre, and had farther, the private Consent of the Patentee, to take fuch of his Aftors from *Drury-Lane*, as either from Inclination, or Difcontent, might be willing to come over to him, in the *Hay-Market*. The only one he made an Exception of, was myfelf: For tho' he chiefly depended upon his Singers, and Dancers, he faid, it would be neceffary to keep

keep some one tolerable Actor with him, that might enable him to set those Machines a going. Under this Limitation, of not entertaining me, *Swiney* seem'd to acquiese, 'till after he had open'd, with the so recruited Company, in the *Hay-Market*: the Actors that came to him from *Drury-Lane*, were *Wilks*, *Estcourt*, *Mills*, *Keen*, *Johnson*, *Bullock*, *Mrs. Oldfield*, *Mrs. Rogers*, and some few others of less note: But I must here let you know, that this Project was form'd, and put in Execution, all in very few Days, in the Summer-Season, when no Theatre was open. To all which I was entirely a Stranger, being at this time at a Gentleman's House in *Gloucestershire*, scribbling, if I mistake not, the *Wife's Resentment*.

The first Word I heard of this Transaction, was by a Letter from *Swiney*, inviting me to make One in the *Hay-Market* Company, whom he hop'd I could not but now think the stronger Party. But, I confess, I was not a little alarm'd, at this Revolution: For I consider'd, that I knew of no visible Fund to support these Actors, but their own Industry; that all his Recruits from *Drury-Lane* would want new Cloathing; and that the warmest Industry would be always labouring up Hill, under so necessary an Expence, so bad a Situation, and so inconvenient a Theatre. I was always of opinion too, that in changing Sides, in most Conditions, there generally were discovered more unforeseen Inconveniencies, than
visible

visible Advantages; and that at worst, there would always some sort of Merit remain with Fidelity, tho' unsuccessful. Upon these Considerations, I was only thankful for the Offers made me, from the *Hay-Market*, without accepting them; and soon after came to Town towards the usual time of their beginning to act, to offer my Service to our old Master. But I found our Company so thinn'd, that it was almost impracticable, to bring any one tolerable Play upon the Stage. When I ask'd him, where were his Actors, and in what manner he intended to proceed? he reply'd, *Don't you trouble yourself, come along, and I'll shew you.* He then led me about all the By-places in the House, and shew'd me fifty little Back-doors, dark Closets, and narrow Passages; in Alterations and Contrivances of which kind he had busied his Head, most part of the Vacation; for he was scarce ever, without some notable Joyner, or a Bricklayer extraordinary, in pay, for twenty Years. And there are so many odd obscure Places about a Theatre, that his Genius in Nook-building was never out of Employment; nor could the most vain-headed Author, be more deaf to an Interruption in reciting his Works, than our wise Master was, while entertaining me with the Improvements he had made in his invisible Architecture; all which, without thinking any one Part of it necessary; tho' I seem'd to approve, I could not help, now and then, breaking in, upon his Delight, with the impertinent Question of

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—*But, Master, where are your Actors?* But it seems I had taken a wrong time for this sort of Enquiry; his Head was full of Matters of more moment (and, as you find) I was to come another time for an Answer: A very hopeful Condition I found myself in, under the Conduct of so profound a Vertuoso, and so considerate a Master! But, to speak of him seriously, and to account for this Disregard to his Actors, his Notion was, that Singing, and Dancing, or any sort of Exotick Entertainments, would make an ordinary Company of Actors too hard, for the best Set, who had only plain Plays to subsist on. Now, though I am afraid too much might be said, in favour of this Opinion, yet I thought he laid more Stress upon that sort of Merit, than it would bear; as I therefore found myself of so little Value with him, I could not help setting a little more upon myself, and was resolv'd to come to a short Explanation with him. I told him, I came to serve him, at a time, when many of his best Actors had deserted him; that he might now have the Refusal of me; but I could not afford to carry the Compliment so far, as to lessen my Income by it; that I therefore expected, either my casual Pay to be advanced, or the Payment of my former Sallary made certain, for, as many Days, as we had acted the Year before.—No, he was not willing to alter his former Method; but I might chuse whatever Parts I had a mind to act, of theirs who had left him. When I found him,

as I thought, so insensible, or impregnable, I look'd gravely in his Face, and told him—He knew upon what Terms, I was willing to serve him; and took my leave. By this time, the *Hay-Market* Company had begun acting, to Audiences something better than usual, and were all paid their full Sallaries, a Blessing they had not felt, in some Years, in either House before. Upon this Success, *Swiney* press'd the Patentee to execute the Articles they had as yet only verbally agreed on, which were in Substance, That *Swiney* should take the *Hay-Market* House in his own Name, and have what Actors he thought necessary from *Drury-Lane*, and after all Payments punctually made, the Profits should be equally divided between these two Undertakers. But so it, and fair! Rashness was a Fault, that had never yet been imputed to the Patentee; certain Payments were Methods he had not of a long, long time been us'd to; that Point still wanted time for Consideration. But *Swiney* was as hasty, as the other was slow, and was resolv'd to know what he had to trust to, before they parted; and to keep him the closer, to his Bargain, he stood upon his Right of having *Me* added to that Company, if I was willing to come into it. But this was a Point as absolutely refus'd on one side, as insisted on, on the other. In this Contest, high Words were exchange'd on both sides, 'till, in the End, this their last private Meeting came to an open Rupture: But before it was publickly known, *Swiney*,
by

by fairly letting me into the whole Transaction, took effectual means to secure me in his Interest. When the Mystery of the Patente's Indifference to me was unfolded, and that his slighting me, was owing to the Security he rely'd on, of *Swiney's* not daring to engage me, I could have no further Debate with myself, which side of the Question I should adhere to. To conclude, I agreed, in two Words, to act with *Swiney*; and from this time, every Change that happen'd in the Theatrical Government, was a nearer Step to that twenty Years of Prosperity, which Actors, under the Menagement of Actors, not long afterwards, enjoy'd. What was the immediate Consequence of this last Desertion from *Drury-Lane*, shall be the Subject of another Chapter.





C H A P. X.

The recruited Actors, in the Hay-Market, encourag'd by a Subscription. Drury-Lane, under a particular Management. The Power of a Lord-Chamberlain, over the Theatres, consider'd. How it had been formerly exercis'd. A Digression to Tragick Authors.

HAVING shewn the particular Conduct of the Patentee, in refusing so fair an Opportunity of securing to himself both Companies, under his sole Power, and Interest; I shall now lead the Reader, after a short View of what pass'd in this new Establishment of the *Hay-Market Theatre*, to the Accidents, that the Year following, compell'd the same Patentee, to receive both Companies, united, into the *Drury-Lane Theatre*, notwithstanding his Disinclination to it.

It may, now, be imagin'd, that such a Detachment of Actors from *Drury-Lane*, could not but give a new Spirit to those in the *Hay-Market*; not only by enabling them to act each others Plays to better Advantage; but by an emulous Industry, which had lain too long inactive among them, and without which they plainly saw, they could not be sure of Subsistence. Plays, by this means, began to recover

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a good Share of their former Esteem, and Favour; and the Profits of them, in about a Month, enabled our new Manager to discharge his Debt (of something more than Two hundred Pounds) to his old Friend the Patentee; who had now left him, and his Troop, in trust, to fight their own Battles. The greatest Inconvenience they still laboured under, was the immoderate Wideness of their House; in which, as I have observ'd, the Difficulty of Hearing, may be said to have bury'd half the Auditors Entertainment. This Defect seem'd evident, from the much better Reception several new Plays (first acted there) met with when they afterwards came to be play'd by the same Actors, in *Drury-Lane*: Of this Number were the *Stratagem*, and the *Wife's Resentment*; to which I may add, the *Double Gallant*. This last was a Play made up of what little was tolerable, in two, or three others, that had no Success, and were laid aside, as so much Poetical Lumber; but by collecting and adapting the best Parts of them all, into one Play, the *Double Gallant* has had a Place, every Winter, amongst the Publick Entertainments, these Thirty Years. As I was only the Compiler of this Piece, I did not publish it in my own Name; but as my having but a Hand in it, could not be long a Secret, I have been often treated as a Plagiary on that Account: Not that I think I have any right to complain, of whatever would detract from the Merit of that sort of Labour, yet, a Candler may be allow'd to be useful,

useful, though he is not famous: And I hope a Man is not blameable for doing a little Good, tho' he cannot do as much as another? But so it is — Twopenny Criticks must live, as well as Eighteenpenny Authors!

While the Stage was thus recovering its former Strength, a more honourable Mark of Favour was shewn to it, than it was ever known before, or since, to have receiv'd. The, then, Lord *Hallifax*, was not only the Patron of the Men of Genius of this Time, but had likewise a generous Concern for the Reputation, and Prosperity of the Theatre, from whence the most elegant Dramatick Labours of the Learned he knew, had often shone in their brightest Lustre. A Proposal therefore was drawn up, and addressed to that Noble Lord, for his Approbation, and Assistance, to raise a publick Subscription for Reviving Three Plays of the best Authors, with the full Strength of the Company; every Subscriber to have Three Tickets, for the first Day of each Play, for his single Payment of Three Guineas. This Subscription his Lordship so zealously encouraged, that from his Recommendation chiefly, in a very little time, it was compleated. The Plays were *Julius Caesar* of *Shakspeare*; the *King and no King* of *Fletcher*; and the Comic Scenes of *Dryden's Marriage à la mode*, and of his *Murd-en Queen* put together, for it was judg'd, that as these comic Epitomes were utterly independent of the serious Scenes, they were originally written to, they might on this occasion be

as well Episodes either to the other, and so make up five livelier Acts between them: At least the Project so well succeeded, that those comic Parts have never since, been replaced, but were continued to be jointly acted, as one Play, several Years after.

By the Aid of this Subscription, which happen'd in 1707, and by the additional Strength, and Industry, of this Company, not only the Actors, (several of which were handsomely advanc'd, in their Salaries) were duly paid, but the Manager himself too, at the Foot of his Account, stood a considerable Gainer.

At the same time the Patentee of *Drury-Lane* went on in his usual Method of paying extraordinary Prices to Singers, Dancers, and other exotick Performers, which were as constantly deducted out of the sinking Salaries of his Actors: 'Tis true, his Actors, perhaps, might not deserve much more than he gave them; yet, by what I have related, it is plain he chose not to be troubled, with such, as visibly had deserv'd more: For it seems he had not purchas'd his Share of the Patent, to mend the Stage, but to make Money of it: And to say Truth, his Sense of every thing to be shewn there, was much upon a Level, with the Taste of the Multitude, whose Opinion, and whose Money well pleas'd him full as much, as that of the best Judges. His Point was to please the Majority, who, could more easily comprehend any thing they saw, than the daintiest things, that could be said to them.

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But in this Notion he kept no medium; for in my Memory, he carry'd it so far, that he was (some few Years before this time) actually dealing for an extraordinary fine Elephant, at a certain Sum, for every Day he might think fit to shew the tractable Genius of that vast quiet Creature, in any Play or Farce, in the Theatre (then standing) in *Derfet-Garden*. But from the Jealousy, which so formidable a Rival had rais'd in his Dancers, and by his Bricklayer's assuring him, that if the Walls were to be open'd wide enough for its Entrance, it might endanger the fall of the House, he gave up his Project, and with it, so hopeful a Prospect of making the Receipts of the Stage run higher than all the Wit, and Force of the best Writers had ever yet rais'd them to.

About the same time of his being under this Disappointment, he put in Practice another Project of as new, though not of so bold a Nature; which was his introducing a Set of Rope-dancers, into the same Theatre; for the first Day of whose Performance, he had given out some Play in which I had a material Part: But I was hardy enough to go into the Pit, and acquaint the Spectators near me, that I hop'd, they would not think it a Mark of my Disrespect to them, if I declin'd acting upon any Stage, that was brought to so low a Disgrace, as ours was like to be by that Day's Entertainment. My Excuse was so well taken, that I never after found any ill Consequences, or heard of the least Disapprobation of it: And

the whole Body of Actors too, protesting against such an Abuse of their Profession, our cautious Master was too much alarm'd, and intimidated to repeat it.

After what I have said, it will be no wonder, that all due Regards to the original Use, and Institution of the Stage should be utterly lost or neglected: Nor was the Conduct of this Manager easily to be alter'd, while he had found the Secret of making Money out of Disorder and Confusion: For however strange it may seem, I have often observ'd him inclin'd to be cheerful in the Distresses of his Theatrical Affairs, and equally reserv'd and pensive, when they went smoothly forward with a visible Profit. Upon a Run of good Audiences, he was more frighted to be thought a Gainer, which might make him accountable to others, than he was dejected with bad Houses, which at worst, he knew would make others accountable to him: And as, upon a moderate Computation, it cannot be supposed, that the confessed Accounts of a twenty Year's Wear, and Tear, in a Play-house, could be fairly adjust'd by a Master in Chancery, under four-score Years more, it will be no Surprize, that by the Neglect, or rather the Discretion of other Proprietors, in not throwing away good Money after bad, this Hero of a Manager, who alone supported the War, should in time so fortify himself by Delay, and so tire his Enemies, that he became sole Monarch of his Theatrical Empire, and left the quiet Possession of it, to his Successors.

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If these Facts seem so trivial for the Attention of a sensible Reader, let it be consider'd, that they are not chosen Fictions, to *entertain*, but Truths necessary to *inform* him, under what low Shifts, and Disgraces, what Disorders and Revolutions the Stage labour'd, before it could recover that Strength, and Reputation, wherewith it began to flourish, towards the latter End of Queen *Anne's* Reign; and which it continued to enjoy, for a Course of twenty Years following. But let us resume our Account of the new Settlement, in the *Hay-Market*.

It may be a natural Question, why the Actors, whom *Swiney* brought over to his Undertaking, in the *Hay-Market*, would tie themselves down to limited Salaries? for though he, as their Manager, was obliged to make them certain Payments, it was not certain that the Receipts would enable him to do it; and since their own Industry was the only visible Fund they had to depend upon, why would they not, for that Reason, insist upon their being Sharers as well of possible Profits, as Losses? How far in this Point, they acted right, or wrong, will appear from the following State of their Case.

It must first be consider'd, that this Scheme of their Desertion, was all concerted, and put in Execution in a Week's Time, which short Warning might make them overlook that Circumstance, and the sudden Prospect of being deliver'd from having seldom more, than half

their Pay, was a Contentment that had bounded all their farther Views. Besides, as there could be no room to doubt of their receiving their full Pay, previous to any Profits, that might be reap'd by their Labour, and as they had no great Reason to apprehend those Profits could exceed their respective Salaries, so far as to make them repine at them, they might think it but reasonable, to let the Chance of any extraordinary Gain be on the Side of their Leader, and Director. But farther, as this Scheme had the Approbation of the Court, these Actors, in reality, had it not in their Power to alter any Part of it: And what induced the Court to encourage it, was, that by having the Theatre, and its Manager more immediately dependent on the Power of the Lord Chamberlain, it was not doubted but the Stage would be recover'd into such a Reputation, as might now do Honour, to that absolute Command, which the Court, or its Officers seem'd always fond of having over it.

Here, to set the Constitution of the Stage in a clearer Light, it may not be amiss, to look back a little on the Power of a Lord Chamberlain, which, as may have been observ'd, in all Changes of the Theatrical Government, has been the main Spring without which no Scheme, of what kind soever, could be set in Motion. My Intent is not to enquire how far, by Law, this Power has been limited, or extended; but merely as an Historian, to relate Facts, to gratify the Curious, and then leave them

them to their own Reflections: This, too, I am the more inclin'd to, because there is no one Circumstance, which has affected the Stage, wherein so many Spectators, from those of the highest Rank, to the Vulgar, have seem'd more positively knowing, or less inform'd in.

Though in all the Letters Patent, for acting Plays, &c. since King *Charles the First's* Time, there has been no mention of the Lord Chamberlain, or of any Subordination to his Command, or Authority——yet it was still taken for granted, that no Letters Patent, by the bare Omission of such a great Officer's Name, could have superseded, or taken out of his Hands, that Power, which Time out of Mind, he always had exercised over the Theatre. The common Opinions then abroad were, that if the Profession of Actors was unlawful, it was not in the Power of the Crown to license it; and, if it were not unlawful, it ought to be free, and independent, as other Professions; and that a Patent to exercise it, was only an honorary Favour, from the Crown, to give it a better Grace of Recommendation to the Publick. But as the Truth of this Question seem'd to be wrapt in a great deal of Obscurity, in the old Laws made in former Reigns, relating to Players, &c. it may be no Wonder, that the best Companies of Actors should be desirous of taking Shelter under the visible Power of a Lord Chamberlain, who they knew had, at his Pleasure, favoured, and protected, or born hard upon them: But be all this as it may, a
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Lord Chamberlain (from whenceſoever his Power might be derived), had, till of later Years, had always an implicit Obedience paid to it: I ſhall now give ſome few Inſtances, in what manner it was exerciſed.

What appear'd to be moſt reaſonably, under his Cognizance, was the licenſing, or reſuſing new Plays, or ſtriking out what might be thought offensive, in them: Which Province had been, for many Years, aſſign'd to his inferior Officer, the Maſter of the Revels; yet was not this Liſenſe irrevocable; for ſeveral Plays, though acted by that Permiſſion, had been ſilenced afterwards. The firſt Inſtance of this kind, that common Fame has deliver'd down to us, is that of the *Maid's Tragedy* of Beaumont and Fletcher, which was forbid in King Charles the Second's Time, by an Order from the Lord Chamberlain. For what Reaſon this Interdiſtion was laid upon it, the Politicks of thoſe Days, have only left us to gueſs. Some ſaid, that the killing of the King, in that Play, while the tragical Death of King Charles the Firſt, was then ſo freſh in People's Memory, was an Object too horribly ſupernatural, for a publick Entertainment. What makes this Conjecture ſeem to have ſome Foundation, is that the celebrated Waller, in Compliment to that Court, alter'd the laſt Act of this Play (which is printed at the End of his Works) and gave it a new Cataſtrophe, wherein the Life of the King is loyally ſaved, and the Lady's Matter made up, with a leſs terrible



Geo. Vertue Sculp. 1729

*Celsissimo Principi LEONELLO DUCI de DORSET &c.
Nobilissimo Ordinis Periscelides equiti.*

Hanc Tabulam ad archetypum in ipsius & libris expressam Humillime D. D. D. G. Vertue.





EDMOND WALLER Esq.

*All but the Nymph that should redress his wrong
Attend his Passion and approve his Song.*

A. Kneller pinx. 1684. Ob. 1687.

Geo. Vertue Sculp. 1727.

*Præhonorabili D^{no} GULIELMO PULTENEY Armigero,
hanc Tabulam ad Archetypum in ipso Calcis expressam. D. D.*



Guilielmus D. G. Angliae Rex &^{ct}

terrible Reparation. Others have given out, that a repenting Mistress, in a romantick Revenge of her Dishonour, killing the King, in the very Bed he expected her to come into, was shewing a too dangerous Example to other *Evadnes*, then shining at Court, in the same Rank of royal Distinction; who, if ever their Consciences should have run equally mad, might have had frequent Opportunities of putting the Expiation of their Frailty, into the like Execution. But this I doubt is too deep a Speculation, or too ludicrous a Reason, to be relied on; it being well known, that the Ladies then in favour, were not so nice, in their Notions, as to think their Preterment their Dishonour, or their Lover a Tyrant: Besides, that easy Monarch loved his Roses, without Thorns; nor do we hear, that he much chose, to be himself the first Gatherer of them.

The *Lucius Junius Brutus* of *Not. Lee*, was, in the same Reign, silenced after the third Day of acting it; it being objected, that the Plan, and Sentiments of it had too boldly vindicated, and might enflame republican Principles.

A Prologue (by *Dryden*) to the *Prophets*, was forbid by the Lord *Dorset*, after the first Day of its being spoken. This happen'd when King *William* was prosecuting the War, in *Ireland*. It must be confess'd, that this Prologue had some familiar, metaphorical Sneers, at the Revolution itself; and as the Poetry of it was good, the Offence of it was less pardonable.

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Guilielmus D. G. Angliae Rex & c.

terrible Reparation. Others have given out, that a repenting Mistress, in a romantick Revenge of her Dishonour, killing the King, in the very Bed he expected her to come into, was shewing a too dangerous Example to other *Evadnes*, then shining at Court, in the same Rank of royal Distinction; who, if ever their Consciences should have run equally mad, might have had frequent Opportunities of putting the Expiation of their Frailty, into the like Execution. But this I doubt is too deep a Speculation, or too ludicrous a Reason, to be relied on; it being well known, that the Ladies then in favour, were not so nice, in their Notions, as to think their Preferment their Dishonour, or their Lover a Tyrant: Besides, that easy Monarch loved his Roses, without Thorns; nor do we hear, that he much chose, to be himself the first Gatherer of them.

The *Lucius Junius Brutus* of *Nat. Lee*, was, in the same Reign, silenced after the third Day of acting it; it being objected, that the Plan, and Sentiments of it had too boldly vindicated, and might enflame republican Principles.

A Prologue (by *Dryden*) to the *Prophets*, was forbid by the Lord *Dorset*, after the first Day of its being spoken. This happen'd when King *William* was prosecuting the War, in *Ireland*. It must be confess'd, that this Prologue had some familiar, metaphorical Sneers, at the Revolution itself; and as the Poetry of it was good, the Offence of it was less pardonable.

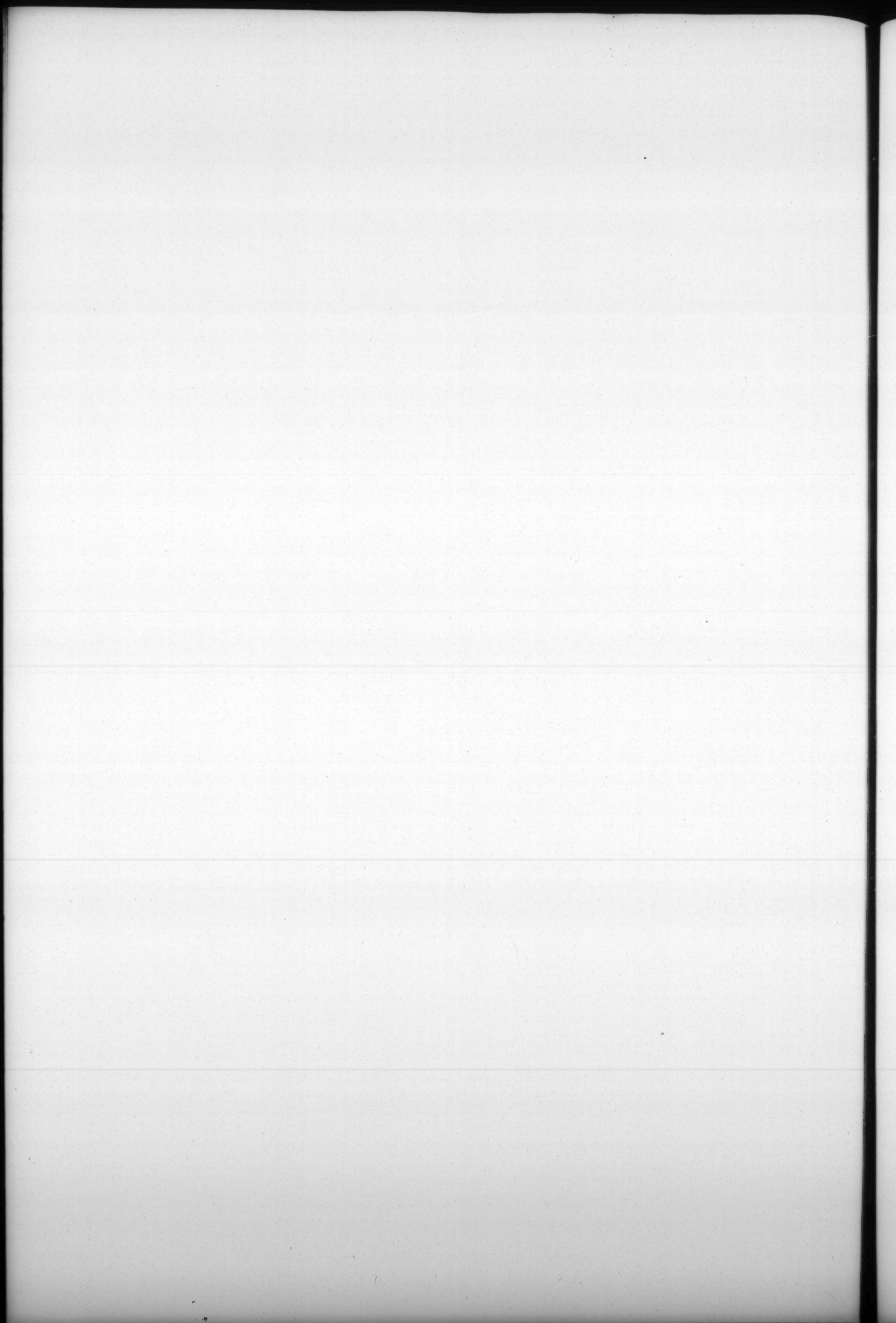
The

The Tragedy of *Mary Queen of Scotland*, had been offer'd to the Stage twenty Years before it was acted: But from the profound Penetration of the Master of the Revels, who saw political Spectres in it, that never appear'd in the Presentation, it had lain, so long upon the Hands of the Author; who had at last, the good Fortune to prevail with a Nobleman, to favour his Petition to Queen *Anne*, for Permission to have it acted: The Queen had the Goodness to refer the Merit of his Play, to the Opinion of that noble Person, although he was not her Majesty's Lord Chamberlain; upon whose Report of it being every way, an innocent Piece, it was soon after acted with Success.

Reader, by your Leave—— I will but just speak a Word, or two to any Author, that has not yet writ one Line of his next Play, and then I will come to my Point again — What I would say to him, is this, Sir, before you set Pen to Paper, think well, and principally of your Design, or chief action, towards which every Line you write ought to be drawn, as to its Centre: If we can say of your finest Sentiments, This, or That might be left out without maiming the Story you would tell us, depend upon it, that fine thing is laid in a wrong Place; and though you may urge, that a bright Thought is not to be resisted, you will not be able to deny, that those very fine Lines would be much finer, if you could find a proper Occasion for them:



*Serenissima et Potentissima Anna, D. G. Anglia, Scotiae Franciae et
Hiberniae Regina &c. Inaugurata XXIII. die Aprilis Anno 1702.*



them : Otherwise you will be thought to take less Advice from *Aristotle*, or *Horace*, than from Poet *Bays* in the *Rehearsal*, who very smartly says — *What the Devil is the Plot good for, but to bring in fine Things?* Compliment the Taste of your Hearers, as much as you please with them, provided they belong to your Subject, but don't, like a dainty Preacher, who has his Eye more upon this World, than the next, leave your Text for them. When your Fable is good, every Part of it will cost you much less Labour, to keep your Narration alive, than you will be forced to bestow upon those elegant Discourses, that are not absolutely conducive to your Catastrophe, or main Purpose : Scenes of that kind, shew but at best, the unprofitable, or injudicious Spirit of a Genius. It is but a melancholy Commendation of a fine Thought, to say, when we have heard it, *Well ! but what's all this to the Purpose ?* Take therefore, in some part, Example by the Author last mention'd ! There are three Plays of his, *The Earl of Essex*, *Anna Bullen*, and *Mary Queen of Scots*, which though they are all written in the most barren, barbarous Style, that was ever able to keep Possession of the Stage, have all interested the Hearts of his Auditors. To what then could this Success be owing, but to the intrinsic, and naked Value of the well-conducted Tales, he has simply told us ? There is something so happy in the Disposition of all his Fables ; all his chief Characters are thrown into
such

such natural Circumstances of Distress, that their Misery, or Affliction, wants very little Assistance from the Ornament of Style, or Words to speak them. When a skillful Actor is so situated, his bare plaintive Tone of Voice, the Cast of Sorrow from his Eye, his slowly graceful Gesture, his humble Sighs of Resignation under his Calamities: All these, I say, are sometimes, without a Tongue, equal to the strongest Eloquence. At such a time, the attentive Auditor supplies from his own Heart, whatever the Poet's Language may fall short of, in Expression, and melts himself into every Pang of Humanity, which the like Misfortunes in real Life could have inspir'd.

After what I have observ'd, whenever I see a Tragedy defective in its Fable, let there be never so many fine Lines in it; I hope I shall be forgiven, if I impute that Defect, to the Idleness, the weak Judgment, or barren Invention of the Author.

If I should be ask'd, why I have not always, my self, followed the Rules I would impose upon others; I can only answer, that whenever I have not, I lie equally open to the same critical Censure. But having often observ'd a better than ordinary Style thrown away, upon the loose, and wandering Scenes of an ill-chosen Story, I imagin'd these Observations might convince some future Author, of how great Advantage a Fable well plann'd must be to a Man of any tolerable Genius.

All this, I own, is leading my Reader out of the way; but if he has as much Time upon his Hands, as I have, (provided we are neither of us tir'd) it may be equally to the Purpose, what he reads, or what I write of. But as I have no Objection to Method, when it is not troublesome, I return to my Subject.

Hitherto we have seen no very unreasonable Instance of this absolute Power of a Lord Chamberlain, though we were to admit, that no one knew of any real Law, or Construction of Law, by which this Power was given him. I shall now offer some Facts relating to it of a more extraordinary Nature, which I leave my Reader to give a Name to.

About the middle of King *William's* Reign, an Order of the Lord Chamberlain was, then, subsisting, that no Actor of either Company, should presume to go from one, to the other, without a Discharge from their respective Managers, and the Permission of the Lord Chamberlain. Notwithstanding such Order, *Powel* being uneasy, at the Favour, *Wilks* was then rising into, had without such Discharge, left the *Drury-Lane* Theatre, and engag'd himself to that of *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields*: But by what follows, it will appear that this Order was not so much intended, to do both of them good, as to do, that which the Court chiefly favour'd (*Lincoln's-Inn-Fields*) no harm. For when *Powel* grew dissatisfy'd at his Station there too, he return'd to *Drury-Lane* (as he had before gone from it) without a Discharge:

But

But halt a little! here, on this Side of the Question, the Order was to stand, in force, and the same Offence against it now, was not to be equally pass'd over. He was the next Day taken up by a Messenger, and confin'd to the Porter's-Lodge, where, to the best of my Remembrance, he remain'd about two Days; when the Managers of *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields*, not thinking an Actor of his loose Character worth their farther Trouble, gave him up; though perhaps he was releas'd, for some better Reason. Upon this occasion, the next Day, behind the Scenes, at *Drury-Lane*, a Person of great Quality, in my hearing, enquiring of *Powel*, into the Nature of his Offence, after he had heard it, told him, That if he had had Patience, or Spirit enough, to have staid in his Confinement, till he had given him Notice of it, he would have found him a handsomer way of coming out of it.

Another time the same Actor, *Powel*, was provok'd at *Will's* Coffee-house, in a Dispute about the Play-house Affairs, to strike a Gentleman, whose Family had been sometimes Masters of it; a Complaint of this Insolence was, in the Absence of the Lord-Chamberlain, immediately made to the Vice-Chamberlain, who so highly resent'd it, that he thought himself bound in Honour, to carry his Power of redressing it, as far as it could possibly go: For *Powel* having a Part in the Play, that was acted the Day after; the Vice-Chamberlain
sent

sent an Order to silence the whole Company, for having suffer'd *Powel* to appear upon the Stage, before he had made that Gentleman Satisfaction, although the Masters of the Theatre had had no Notice of *Powel's* Misbehaviour: However, this Order was obey'd, and remain'd in force for two or three Days, 'till the same Authority was pleas'd, or advis'd, to revoke it. From the Measures this injur'd Gentleman took for his Redress, it may be judg'd how far it was taken for granted, that a Lord-Chamberlain had an absolute Power over the Theatre.

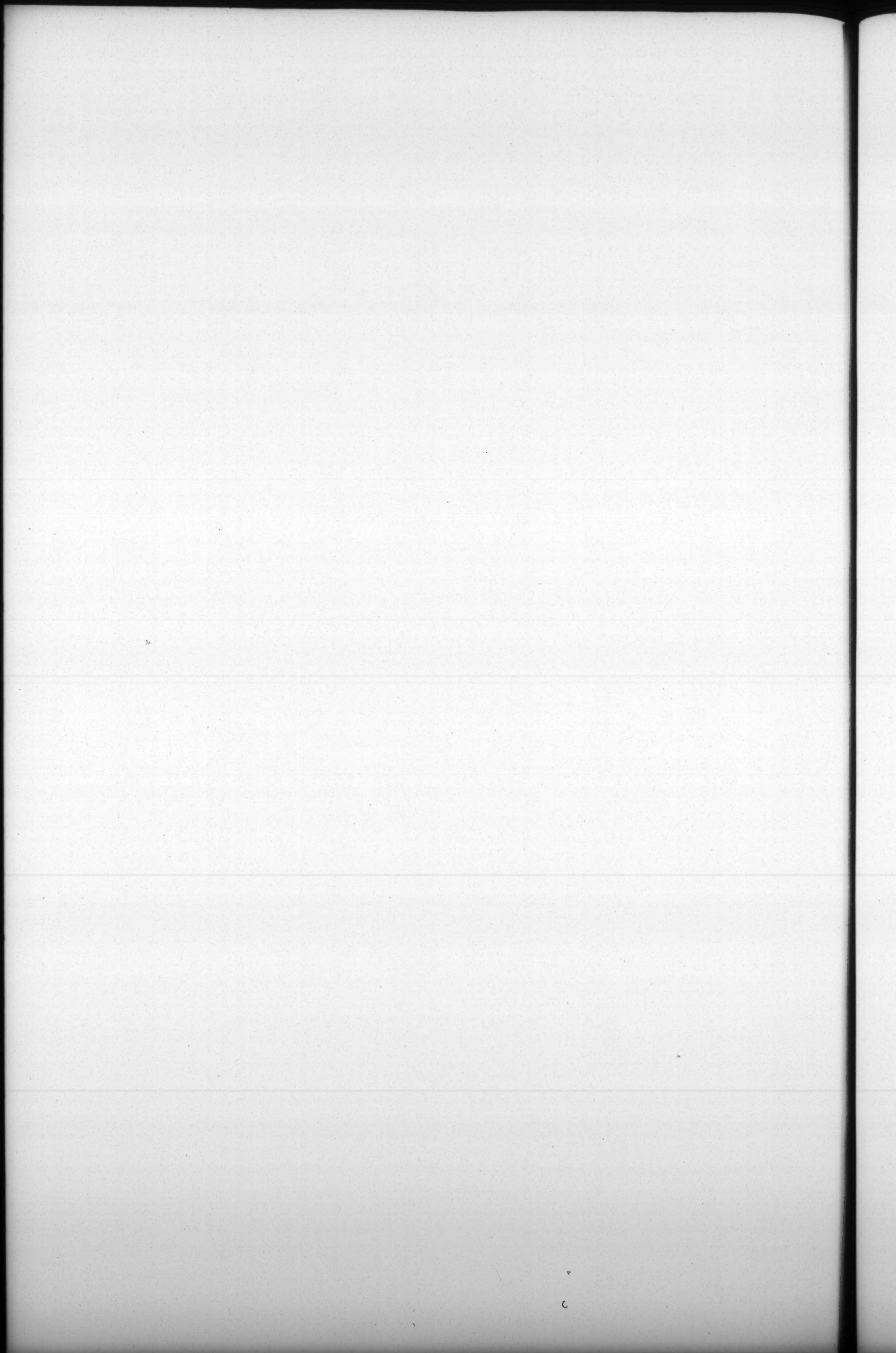
I shall now give an Instance of an Actor, who had the Resolution to stand upon the Defence of his Liberty, against the same Authority, and was reliev'd by it.

In the same King's Reign, *Dogget*, who tho', from a severe Exactness in his Nature, he could be seldom long easy in any Theatre, where Irregularity, not to say Injustice, too often prevail'd, yet in the private Conduct of his Affairs, he was a prudent honest Man. He therefore took an unusual Care, when he return'd to act under the Patent, in *Drury-Lane*, to have his Articles drawn firm and binding: But having some Reason to think the Patentee had not dealt fairly with him, he quitted the Stage, and would act no more, rather chusing to lose his whatever unsatisfy'd, Demands, than go through the chargeable, and tedious Course of the Law to recover it. But the Patentee, who (from other People's Judgment)

ment) knew the Value of him, and who wanted too, to have him sooner back, than the Law could possibly bring him, thought the surer way would be, to desire a shorter Redress from the Authority of the Lord-Chamberlain. Accordingly upon his Complaint, a Messenger was immediately dispatch'd to *Norwich*, where *Dogget* then was, to bring him up, in Custody: But doughty *Dogget*, who had Money in his Pocket, and the Cause of Liberty at his Heart, was not, in the least intimidated, by this formidable Summons. He was observ'd to obey it with a particular Chearfulness, entertaining his Fellow-traveller, the Messenger, all the way in the Coach (for he had protested against Riding) with as much Humour as a Man of his Business might be capable of tasting. And as he found his Charges were to be defray'd, he, at every Inn, call'd for the best Dainties the Country could afford, or a pretended weak Appetite could digest. At this rate they jollily roll'd on, more with the Air of a Jaunt, than a Journey, or a Party of Pleasure, than of a poor Devil in Durance. Upon his Arrival in Town, he immediately apply'd to the Lord Chief Justice *Holt*, for his *Habeas Corpus*. As his Case was something particular, that eminent and learned Minister of the Law took a particular Notice of it: For *Dogget* was not only discharged, but the Process of his Confinement (according to common Fame) had a Censure pass'd upon it, in Court, which I doubt, I am not Lawyer enough
to



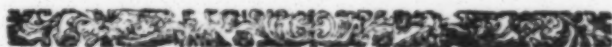
The Right Hon^{ble} S^r John Holt Kn^t
 Lord CHIEF JUSTICE of the Court of KINGS BENCH
 And one of their Ma^{ties} most Hon^{ble} Privy Council Año 1689
 Printed and Sold by John King at the Globe against the Church in the Poultry



to repeat! To conclude, the officious Agents in this Affair finding, that, in *Dogget*, they had mistaken their Man, were mollify'd into milder Proceedings, and (as he afterwards told me) whisper'd something, in his Ear, that took away *Dogget's* farther Uneasiness about it.

By these Instances we see how naturally Power only founded on Custom, is apt, where the Law is silent, to run into Excesses, and while it laudably pretends to govern others, how hard it is to govern itself. But since the Law has lately open'd its Mouth, and has said plainly, that some Part of this Power to govern the Theatre shall be, and is plac'd in a proper Person; and as it is evident, that the Power of that white Staff, ever since it has been in the noble Hand, that now holds it, has been us'd with the utmost Lenity, I would beg leave of the murmuring Multitude, who frequent the Theatre, to offer them a simple Question or two, *viz.* Pray, Gentlemen, how came you, or rather your Fore-fathers, never to be mutinous, upon any of the occasional Facts I have related? And why have you been so often tumultuous, upon a Law's being made, that only confirms a less Power, than was formerly exercis'd, without any Law to support it? You cannot sure, say, such Discontent is either just, or natural, unless you allow it a Maxim in your Politics, that Power exercis'd *without* Law, is a less Grievance, than the same Power exercis'd *according* to Law!

Having thus given the clearest View I was able, of the usual Regard paid to the Power of a Lord-Chamberlain, the Reader will more easily conceive, what Influence, and Operation that Power must naturally have, in all Theatrical Revolutions; and particularly in the complete Re-union of both Companies, which happen'd in the Year following.



C H A P. XI.

Some Chimerical Thoughts of making the Stage useful : Some to its Reputation. The Patent unprofitable, to all the Proprietors, but one. A fourth Part of it given away to Colonel Brett. A Digression to his Memo-ry. The two Companies of Actors re-united, by his Interest, and Management. The first Direction of Operas only, given to Mr. Swiney.

FROM the Time, that the Company of Actors, in the *Hay-Market*, was recruited with those from *Drury-Lane*, and came into the Hands of their new Director, *Swiney*, the Theatre, for three or four Years following, suffer'd so many Convulsions, and was thrown every other Winter under such different Interests, and Management, before it came to a firm and lasting Settlement, that I am doubtful, if the most candid Reader

der will have Patience, to go through a full, and fair Account of it: And yet I would fain flatter my self, that those, who are not too wise, to frequent the Theatre (or have Wit enough to distinguish what sort of Sights there, either do Honour, or Disgrace to it) may think their national Diversion no contemptible Subject, for a more able Historian, than I pretend to be: If I have any particular Qualification, for the Task, more than another, it is that I have been an ocular Witness of the several Facts, that are to fill up the rest of my Volume; and am, perhaps, the only Person living (however unworthy) from whom the same Materials can be collected; but let them come from whom they may, whether, at best, they will be worth reading; perhaps a Judgment may be better form'd after a patient Perusal of the following Digression.

In whatever cold Esteem, the Stage may be, among the Wise, and Powerful; it is not so much a Reproach, to those, who contentedly enjoy it in its lowest Condition, as that Condition of it, is to those, who (though they cannot but know, to how valuable a publick Use, a Theatre, well establish'd, might be rais'd) yet in so many civiliz'd Nations, have neglected it. This perhaps will be call'd thinking my own wiser, than all the wise Heads, in *Europe*. But, I hope, a more humble Sense will be given to it; at least I only mean, that if so many Governments have their Reasons, for their Disregard of their

Theatres, those Reasons may be deeper, than my Capacity has yet been able to dive into: If therefore my simple Opinion is a wrong one, let the Singularity of it expose me: And tho' I am only building a Theatre in the Air, it is there, however, at so little Expence, and in so much a better Taste, than any I have yet seen, that I cannot help saying of it, as a wiser Man did (it may be) upon a wiser Occasion:

—*Si quid novisli rectius illis,*
Candidus imperti; si non—

Hor.

Give me leave to play, with my Project, in Fancy.

I say then, that as I allow nothing is more liable to debase, and corrupt the Minds of a People, than a licentious Theatre; so under a just, and proper Establishment, it were possible to make it, as apparently the School of Manners, and of Virtue. Were I to collect all the Arguments, that might be given for my Opinion, or to enforce it by exemplary Proofs, it might swell this short Digression to a Volume; I shall therefore trust the Validity of what I have laid down, to a single Fact, that may be still fresh, in the Memory of many living Spectators. When the Tragedy of *Cato* was first acted, let us call to mind the noble Spirit of Patriotism, which that Play then infus'd into the Breasts of a free People, that crowded to it; with what affecting Force, was that most elevated

of Human Virtues recommended? Even the false Pretenders to it felt an unwilling Conviction, and made it a Point of Honour to be foremost, in their Approbation; and this too at a time, when the fermented Nation had their different Views of Government. Yet the sublime Sentiments of Liberty, in that venerable Character, rais'd, in every sensible Hearer such conscious Admiration, such compell'd Assent to the Conduct of a suffering Virtue, as even *demand*ed two almost irreconcilable Parties to embrace, and join in their equal Applauses of it. Now, not to take from the Merit of the Writer, had that Play never come to the Stage, how much of this valuable Effect of it must have been lost? It then could have had no more immediate weight with the Publick, than our poring upon the many ancient Authors, thro' whose Works the same Sentiments have been, perhaps, less profitably dispers'd, tho' amongst Millions of Readers; but by bringing such Sentiments to the Theatre, and into Action, what a superior Lustre did they shine with? There, *Cato* breath'd again, in Life; and though he perish'd in the Cause of Liberty, his Virtue was victorious, and left the Triumph of it in the Heart of every melting Spectator. If Effects, like these, are laudable; if the Representation of such Plays can carry Conviction with so much Pleasure, to the Understanding; have they not vastly the Advantage of any other

human Helps to Eloquence? What equal Method can be found to lead, or stimulate the Mind, to a quicker Sense of Truth, and Virtue, or warm a People into the Love, and Practice of such Principles, as might be at once a Defence, and Honour to their Country? In what Shape could we listen to Virtue with equal Delight, or Appetite of Instruction? The Mind of Man is naturally free, and when he is compell'd, or menac'd into any Opinion that he does not readily conceive, he is more apt to doubt the Truth of it, than when his Capacity is led by Delight, into Evidence and Reason. To preserve a Theatre in this Strength, and Purity of Morals, is, I grant, what the wisest Nations, have not been able to perpetuate, or to transmit long to their Posterity: But this Difficulty will rather heighten, than take from the Honour of the Theatre: The greatest Empires have decay'd for want of proper Heads to guide them, and the Ruins of them sometimes have been the Subject of Theatres, that could not be, themselves exempt, from as various Revolutions: Yet may not the most natural Inference from all this be, That the Talents requisite to form good Actors, great Writers, and true Judges, were like those of wise and memorable ministers, as well the Gifts of Fortune, as of Nature, and not always to be found, in all Climes or Ages? Or can there be a stronger modern Evidence of the Value of Dramatick Performances, than that in many Countries, where the Papal Religion prevails,

prevails, the Holy Policy (though it allows not to an Actor Christian Burial) is so conscious of the Usefulness of his Art, that it will frequently take in the Assistance of the Theatre, to give even sacred History, in a Tragedy, a Recommendation to the more pathetick Regard of their People? How can such Principles, in the Face of the World, refuse the Bones of a Wretch the lowest Benefit of Christian Charity, after having admitted his Profession (for which they deprive him of that Charity) to serve the solemn Purposes of Religion? How far then is this Religious Inhumanity short of that famous Painter's, who, to make his *Crucifix* a Master-piece of Nature, stabb'd the Innocent Hireling, from whose Body he drew it; and having heighten'd the holy Portrait, with his last Agonies of Life, then sent it to be the consecrated Ornament of an Altar? Though we have only the Authority of common Fame, for this Story, yet be it true or false, the Comparison will still be just. Or let me ask another Question more humanly political.

How came the *Athenians* to lay out an hundred thousand Pounds upon the Decorations of one single Tragedy of *Sophocles*? Not, sure, as it was merely a Spectacle for Idleness, or Vacancy of Thought to gape at, but because it was the most rational, most instructive, and delightful Composition, that Human Wit had yet arrived at; and consequently the most worthy to be the Entertainment of a wise, and warlike

warlike Nation: And it may be still a Question, whether the *Sophocles* inspir'd this publick Spirit, or this publick Spirit inspir'd the *Sophocles*?

But alas! as the Power of giving, or receiving such Inspirations from either of these Causes, seems pretty well at an End; now I have shot my Bolt, I shall descend to talk more like a Man of the Age, I live in: For, indeed, what is all this to a common *English* Reader? Why truly, as *Shakespear* terms it—*Caviare to the Multitude*! Honest *John Trott* will tell you, that if he were to believe what I have said of the *Athenians*, he is at most, but astonish'd at it; but that if the twentieth Part of the Sum I have mentioned were to be apply'd out of the publick Money, to the Setting off the best Tragedy, the nicest Noddle in the Nation could produce, it would probably raise the Passions higher in those that did not like it, than in those that did; it might as likely meet with an Insurrection, as the Applause of the People, and so, mayhap, be fitter for the Subject of a Tragedy, than for a publick Fund to support it. — Truly, Mr. *Trott*, I cannot but own, that I am very much of your Opinion: I am only concerned, that the Theatre has not a better Pretence to the Care and further Consideration of those Governments, where it is tolerated; but as what I have said, will not probably do it any great Harm, I hope, I have not put you out of Patience,

tience, by throwing a few good Wishes after an old Acquaintance.

To conclude this Digression. If for the Support of the Stage, what is generally shewn there, must be lower'd to the Taste of common Spectators; or if it is inconsistent with Liberty to mend that vulgar Taste, by making the Multitude less merry there; or by abolishing every low and senseless Jollity, in which the Understanding can have no Share; whenever, I say, such is the State of the Stage, it will be as often liable to unanswerable Censure, and manifest Disgraces. Yet there *was* a Time, not yet, out of many People's Memory, when it subsisted upon its own rational Labours; when even Success attended an Attempt to reduce it to Decency; and when Actors themselves were hardy enough to hazard their Interest, in Pursuit of so dangerous a Reformation. And this Crisis, I am myself as impatient, as any tir'd Reader can be, to arrive at. I shall therefore endeavour to lead him the shortest way to it. But as I am a little jealous of the badness of the Road, I must reserve to myself the Liberty of calling upon any Matter, in my way, for a little Refreshment to whatever Company may have the Curiosity, or Goodness to go along with me.

When the sole managing Patentee at *Drury-Lane*, for several Years, could never be persuaded or driven to any Account with the Adventurers; Sir *Thomas Skipwith* (who, if I am
rightly

rightly inform'd, had an equal Share with him) grew so weary of the Affair, that he actually made a Present of his entire Interest in it, upon the following Occasion.

Sir *Thomas* happen'd, in the Summer preceding the Re-union of the Companies, to make a Visit to an intimate Friend of his, Colonel *Brett*, of *Sandywell*, in *Gloucestershire*; where the Pleasantness of the Place, and the agreeable manner of passing his Time there, had rais'd him to such a Gallantry of Heart, that, in Return, to the Civilities of his Friend the Colonel, he made him an Offer of his whole Right in the Patent; but not to overrate the Value of his Present, told him, he himself had made nothing of it, these ten Years: But the Colonel (he said) being a greater Favourite of the People in Power, and (as he believ'd) among the Actors too, than himself was, might think of some Scheme, to turn it to Advantage, and in that Light, if he lik'd it, it was at his Service. After a great deal of Raillery on both Sides, of what Sir *Thomas* had *not* made of it, and the particular Advantages the Colonel was likely to make of it; they came to a laughing Resolution, That an Instrument should be drawn the next Morning, of an absolute Conveyance of the Premises. A Gentleman of the Law, well known to them both, happening to be a Guest there, at the same time, the next Day produced the Deed, according to his Instructions, in the Presence of whom, and of others, it was sign'd, seal'd,

feal'd, and deliver'd to the Purposes therein contain'd.

This Transaction may be another Instance (as I have elsewhere observed) at how low a Value, the Interests, in a Theatrical License, were then held; tho' it was visible from the Success of *Swincy* in that very Year, that with tolerable Management, they could, at no time, have fail'd of being a profitable Purchase.

The next Thing to be consider'd was, what the Colonel should do with his new Theatrical Commission, which, in another's Possession, had been of so little Importance. Here it may be necessary to premise, that this Gentleman was the first of any Consideration, since my coming to the Stage, with whom I had contracted a Personal Intimacy; which might be the Reason, why, in this Debate, my Opinion had some Weight with him: Of this Intimacy too, I am the more tempted to talk, from the natural Pleasure of calling back, in Age, the Pursuits, and happy Ardours of Youth long past, which, like the Ideas of a delightful Spring, in a Winter's Ruminati^on, are sometimes equal to the former Enjoyment of them. I shall, therefore, rather chuse, in this Place to gratify my self, than my Reader, by setting the fairest Side of this Gentleman in view, and by indulging a little conscious Vanity, in shewing how early in Life, I fell into the Possession of so agreeable a Companion: Whatever Failings he might have to others, he had none to me; nor was he, where he had them, without
his

his valuable Qualities to balance or soften them. Let, then, what was not, to be commended in him, rest with his Ashes, never to be rak'd into: But the friendly Favours I received from him, while living, give me still a Pleasure of paying this only Mite of my Acknowledgment, in my Power, to his Memory. And if my taking this Liberty may find Pardon from several of his fair Relations, still living, for whom I profess the utmost Respect, it will give me but little Concern, tho' my critical Readers should think it all Impertinence.

This Gentleman, then, *Henry*, was the eldest Son of *Henry Brett*, Esq; of *Cowley*, in *Gloucestershire*, who coming early to his Estate of about Two Thousand a Year, by the usual Negligences of young Heirs, had, before this his eldest Son came of age, sunk it to about half that Value, and that not wholly free from Incumbrances. *Mr. Brett*, whom I am speaking of, had his Education, and I might say, ended it, at the University of *Oxford*; for tho' he was settled some time after at the *Temple*, he so little followed the Law there, that his Neglect of it, made the Law (like some of his fair and frail Admirers) very often follow *him*. As he had an uncommon Share of Social Wit, and a handsome Person, with a sanguine Bloom in his Complexion, no wonder they persuaded him, that he might have a better Chance of Fortune, by throwing such Accomplishments, into the gayer World, than by shutting them up,

up, in a Study. The first View, that fires the Head of a young Gentleman of this modish Ambition, just broke loose, from Business, is to cut a Figure (as they call it) in a Side-box, at the Play, from whence their next Step is, to the *Green Room* behind the Scenes, sometimes their *Non ultra*. Hither, at last then, in this hopeful Quest of his Fortune, came this Gentleman-Errant, not doubting but the fickle Dame, while he was thus qualified to receive her, might be tempted to fall into his Lap. And though, possibly, the Charms of our Theatrical Nymphs might have their Share, in drawing him thither; yet in my Observation, the most visible Cause of his first coming, was a more sincere Passion he had conceived for a fair full-bottom'd Perriwig, which I then wore in my first Play of the *Fool in Fashion*, in the Year 1695. For it is to be noted, that, the *Beaux* of those Days, were of a quite different Cast, from the modern Stamp, and had more of the Stateliness of the Peacock in their Mien, than (which now seems to be their highest Emulation) the pert Air of a Lapwing. Now whatever Contempt Philosophers may have, for a fine Perriwig; my Friend, who was not to despise the World, but to live in it, knew very well, that so material an Article of Dress, upon the Head of a Man of Sense, if it became him, could never fail of drawing to him a more partial Regard, and Benevolence, than could possibly be hoped for, in an ill-made one. This perhaps may soften the grave
Censure,

Censure, which so youthful a Purchase might otherwise have laid upon him : In a Word, he made his Attack upon this Perriwig, as your young Fellows generally do upon a Lady of Pleasure ; first, by a few familiar Praises of her Person, and then a civil Enquiry, into the Price of it. But upon his observing me a little surprized at the Levity of his Question, about a Fop's Perriwig, he began to railly himself with so much Wit, and Humour, upon the Folly of his Fondness for it, that he struck me with an equal Desire of granting any thing, in my Power, to oblige so facetious a Customer. This singular Beginning of our Conversation, and the mutual Laughs that ensued upon it, ended in an Agreement, to finish our Bargain that Night, over a Bottle.

If it were possible, the Relation of the happy Indiscretions which passed between us that Night, could give the tenth Part of the Pleasure, I then received from them, I could still repeat them with Delight : But as it may be doubtful, whether the Patience of a Reader may be quite so strong, as the Vanity of an Author, I shall cut it short, by only saying, that single Bottle was the Sire of many a jolly Dozen, that for some Years following, like orderly Children, whenever they were call'd for, came into the same Company. Nor indeed, did I think from that time, whenever he was to be had, any Evening could be agreeably enjoy'd without him. But the long continuance of our Intimacy, perhaps, may be thus accounted for, He

He who can taste Wit in another, may, in some sort, be said to have it himself: Now, as I always had, and (I bless my self for the Folly) still have a quick Relish of whatever did, or can give me Delight: This Gentleman could not but see the youthful Joy, I was generally raised to, whenever I had the Happiness of a *Tête à tête* with him; and it may be a moot Point, whether Wit is not as often inspired, by a proper Attention, as by the brightest Reply, to it. Therefore as he had Wit enough for any two People, and I had Attention enough for any four, there could not well be wanting a sociable Delight, on either side. And tho' it may be true, that a Man of a handsome Person is apt to draw a partial Ear to every thing he says; yet this Gentleman seldom said any thing, that might not have made a Man of the plainest Person agreeable. Such a continual Desire to please, it may be imagined, could not but, sometimes, lead him into a little venial Flattery, rather than not succeed in it. And I, perhaps, might be one of those Flies that was caught in this Honey. As I was, then, a young successful Author, and an Actor, in some unexpected Favour, whether deservedly, or not, imports not; yet such Appearances, at least were plausible Pretences enough, for an amicable Adulation to enlarge upon; and the Sallies of it a less Vanity, than mine, might not have been able to resist. Whatever this Weakness on my side might be, I was not alone in it; for I have heard a Gentle-

man of Condition say, who knew the World as well, as most Men, that live in it, that let his Discretion be ever so much upon its Guard, he never fell into Mr. *Brett's* Company, without being loth to leave it, or carrying away a better Opinion of himself, from it. If his Conversation had this Effect among the Men; what must we suppose to have been the Consequence, when he gave it, a yet softer turn among the Fair Sex? Here now, a *French* Novellist would tell you fifty pretty Lies of him; but as I chuse to be tender of Secrets of that sort, I shall only borrow the good Breeding of that Language, and tell you, in a Word, that I knew several Instances of his being *un Homme a bonne Fortune*. But though his frequent Successes might generally keep him, from the usual Disquiets of a Lover, he knew this was a Life too liquorish to last; and therefore had Reflexions enough, to be govern'd by the Advice of his Friends, to turn these his Advantages of Nature to a better Use.

Among the many Men of Condition, with whom his Conversation had recommended him, to an Intimacy, Sir *Thomas Skipwith* had taken a particular Inclination to him; and as he had the Advancement of his Fortune, at Heart, introduced him, where there was a Lady, who had enough, in her Power, to disencumber him of the World, and make him every way, easy for Life.

While he was in pursuit of this Affair, which no time was to be lost in (for the Lady was

was to be in Town but for three Weeks) I one Day found him idling behind the Scenes, before the Play was begun. Upon sight of him, I took the usual Freedom he allow'd me, to rate him roundly, for the Madness of not improving every Moment in his Power, in what was of such Consequence to him. Why are you not (said I) where you know you only should be? If your Design should once get Wind, in the Town, the Ill-will of your Enemies, or the Sincerity of the Lady's Friends, may soon blow up your Hopes, which, in your Circumstances of Life, cannot be long supported, by the bare Appearance of a Gentleman. — But it is impossible to proceed, without some Apology, for the very familiar Circumstance, that is to follow——Yet, as it might not be so trivial in its Effect, as I fear it may be in the Narration, and is a Mark of that Intimacy, which is necessary should be known, had been between us, I will honestly make bold with my Scruples, and let the plain Truth of my Story take its Chance for Contempt, or Approbation.

After twenty Excuses, to clear himself of the Neglect, I had so warmly charged him with, he concluded them, with telling me, he had been out all the Morning, upon Business, and that his Linen was too much soiled, to be seen in Company. Oh, ho! said I, is that all? Come along with me, we will soon get over that dainty Difficulty: Upon which

X

I haul'd

I haul'd him, by the Sleeve, into my Shifting-Room, he either staring, laughing, or hanging back all the Way. There, when I had lock'd him in, I began to strip off my upper Cloaths, and bad him do the same; still he either did not, or would not seem to understand me, and continuing his Laugh, cry'd, What! is the Puppy mad? No, no, only positive, said I; for look you, in short, the Play is ready to begin, and the Parts that you, and I, are to act to Day, are not of equal consequence; mine of young *Reveller* (in *Greenwich-Park*) is but a Rake; but whatever you may be, you are not to appear so; therefore take my Shirt, and give me yours; for depend upon't, stay here you shall not, and so go about your Business. To conclude, we fairly chang'd Linnen, nor could his Mother's have wrap'd him up more fortunately; for in about ten Days he marry'd the Lady. In a Year or two after his Marriage, he was chosen a Member of that Parliament, which was fitting, when King *William* dy'd. And, upon raising of some new Regiments, was made Lieutenant-Colonel, to that of Sir *Charles Hotham*. But as his Ambition extended not beyond the Bounds of a Park Wall, and a pleasant Retreat in the Corner of it, which, with too much Expence he had just finish'd, he, within another Year, had leave to resign his Company to a younger Brother.

This was the Figure, in Life, he made, when Sir *Thomas Skipwith* thought him the most

most proper Person, to oblige (if it could be an Obligation) with the Present of his Interest in the Patent. And from these Anecdotes of my Intimacy with him, it may be less a Surprise, when he came to Town invested with this new theatrical Power, that I should be the first Person, to whom he took any Notice of it. And notwithstanding he knew I was then engag'd, in another Interest, at the *Hay-Market*, he desired we might consider together, of the best Use he could make of it, assuring me, at the same time, he should think it of none to himself, unless it could in some Shape be turn'd to my Advantage. This friendly Declaration, though it might be generous in him to make, was not needful, to incline me, in whatever might be honestly in my Power, whether by Interest or Negotiation, to serve him. My first Advice, therefore, was, That he should produce his Deeds to the other managing Patentee of *Drury-Lane*, and demand immediate Entrance to a joint Possession of all Effects, and Powers, to which that Deed had given him an equal Title. After which, if he met with no Opposition, to this Demand, (as upon sight of it he did not) that he should be watchful against any Contradiction, from his Collegue, in whatever he might propose, in carrying on the Affair, but to let him see, that he was determin'd in all his Measures. Yet to heighten that Resolution, with an Ease and Temper in his manner, as if he took it for

granted, there could be no Opposition made, to whatever he had a Mind to. For that this Method, added to his natural Talent of Persuading, would imperceptibly lead his Colleague, into a Reliance on his superior Understanding, That however little he car'd for Business, he should give himself the Air at least, of Enquiry into what *had* been done, that what he intended to do, might be thought more considerable, and be the readier comply'd with: For if he once suffer'd his Colleague to seem wiser than himself, there would be no End of his perplexing him with absurd, and dilatory Measures; direct, and plain Dealing being a Quality his natural Diffidence would never suffer him to be Master of; of which, his not complying with his Verbal Agreement with *Savigny*, when the *Hay-Market* House was taken for both their Uses, was an Evidence. And though some People thought it Depth, and Policy in him, to keep things often in Confusion, it was ever my Opinion they over-rated his Skill, and that, in reality his Parts were too weak, for his Post, in which he had always acted, to the best of his Knowledge. That his late Colleague, Sir *Thomas Skipwith*, had trusted too much to his Capacity, for this sort of Business; and was treated by him accordingly, without ever receiving any Profits from it, for several Years: Inasmuch that when he found his Interest in such desperate Hands, he thought the best thing he could do with it was, (as he
saw,

law) to give it away. Therefore if he (Mr. Brett) could once fix himself, as I had advis'd, upon a different Foot, with this, hitherto untractable, Manager, the Business would soon run through whatever Channel, he might have a mind to lead it. And though I allow'd the greatest Difficulty he would meet with, would be in getting his Consent to a Union of the two Companies, which was the only Scheme that could raise the Patent to its former Value, and which, I knew, this close Manager would secretly lay all possible Rubs in the way to; yet it was visible, there was a way of reducing him to Compliance: For though, it was true his Caution would never part with a Straw, by way of Concession, yet to a high Hand, he would give up any thing, provided he were suffer'd to keep his Title to it: If his Hat were taken from his Head, in the Street, he would make no farther Resistance, than to say, *I am not willing to part with it.* Much less would he have the Resolution, openly to oppose any just Measures, when he should find one, who with an equal Right, to his, and with a known Interest to bring them about, was resolv'd to go thro' with them.

Now though I knew my Friend was as thoroughly acquainted with this Patentee's Temper, as myself, yet I thought it not amiss to quicken and support his Resolution, by con- firming to him, the little Trouble he would meet with, in pursuit of the Union I had ad-

vis'd him to; for it must be known, that on our side, Trouble was a sort of Phyfick we did not much care to take: But as the Fatigue of this Affair was likely to be lower'd by a good deal of Entertainment, and Humour, which would naturally engage him, in his dealing with so exotick a Partner; I knew that this softening the Business, into a Diversion, would lessen every Difficulty, that lay in our way to it.

However copiously I may have indulg'd myself in this Commemoration of a Gentleman, with whom I had pass'd so many of my younger Days, with Pleasure, yet the Reader may by this Insight into his Character, and by that of the other Patentee, be better able to judge of the secret Springs, that gave Motion to, or obstructed so considerable an Event, as that of the Re-union of the two Companies of Actors in 1708. In Histories of more weight, for want of such Particulars, we are often deceiv'd in the true Causes of Facts, that most concern us, to be let into; which sometimes makes us ascribe to Policy, or false Appearances of Wisdom, what perhaps, in reality, was the mere Effect of Chance or Humour.

Immediately after Mr. *Brett* was admitted as a joint Patentee, he made use of the Intimacy he had with the Vice-Chamberlain to assist his Scheme of this intended Union, in which he so far prevailed, that it was soon after left to the particular Care of the same Vice-Cham-

Chamberlain, to give him all the Aid, and Power, necessary to the bringing what he desired, to Perfection. The Scheme was, to have but one Theatre for Plays, and another for Operas, under separate Interests. And this the generality of Spectators, as well as the most approv'd Actors, had been some time calling for, as the only expedient to recover the Credit of the Stage, and the valuable Interest of its Managers.

As the Condition of the Comedians at this time, is taken Notice of in my *Dedication* of the *Wife's Resentment*, to the Marquis (now Duke) of Kent, and then Lord-Chamberlain, which was publish'd above thirty Years ago, when I had no thought of ever troubling the World, with this Theatrical History, I see no Reason, why it may not pass, as a Voucher of the Facts I am now speaking of; I shall therefore give them in the very Light I then saw them. After some Acknowledgment for his Lordship's Protection of our (*Hay-Market*) Theatre, it is further said —

“ The Stage has, for many Years, 'till of
 “ late, groan'd under the greatest Discourage-
 “ ments, which have been very much, if not
 “ wholly owing to the Mismanagement of
 “ those, that have awkwardly govern'd it.
 “ Great sums have been ventur'd upon empty
 “ Projects, and Hopes of immoderate Gains;
 “ and when those Hopes have fail'd, the Loss
 “ has been tyrannically deducted out of the
 “ Actors Salary. And if your Lordship had
 “ not

“ not redeem'd them—*This is meant of our*
 “ *being suffer'd to come over to Swiney* — they
 “ were very near being wholly laid aside, or,
 “ at least, the Use of their Labour was to be
 “ swallow'd up, in the pretended Merit of
 “ Singing, and Dancing.”

What follows, relates to the Difficulties in
 dealing with the then impracticable Manager,
viz.

“ — And though your Lordship's Tender-
 “ ness of oppressing, is so very just, that you
 “ have rather staid to convince a Man of your
 “ good Intentions to him, than to do him even
 “ a Service against his Will; yet since your
 “ Lordship has so happily begun the Establish-
 “ ment of the separate Diversions, we live in
 “ hope, that the same Justice, and Resolution,
 “ will still persuade you, to go as successfully
 “ through with it. But while any Man is suf-
 “ fer'd to confound the Industry, and Use of
 “ them, by acting publicly, in opposition, to
 “ your Lordship's equal Intentions, under a
 “ false, and intricate Pretence of not being
 “ able to comply with them; the Town is like-
 “ ly to be more entertain'd with the private
 “ Dissensions, than the publick Performance of
 “ either, and the Actors, in a perpetual Fear,
 “ and Necessity of petitioning your Lordship
 “ every Season, for new Relief.”

Such was the State of the Stage, immedi-
 ately preceding the time of Mr. Brett's being ad-
 mitted a joint Patentee, who, as he saw, with
 clearer Eyes, what was its evident Interest, left

no proper Measures unattempted, to make this, so long despair'd-of, Union practicable. The most apparent Difficulty to be got over, in this Affair, was, what could be done for *Swiney*, in consideration of his being oblig'd to give up those Actors, whom the Power and Choice of the Lord-Chamberlain, had the Year before, set him at the Head of, and by whose Management, those Actors had found themselves in a prosperous Condition. But an Accident, at this time, happily contributed, to make that Matter easy. The Inclination of our People of Quality for foreign Operas, had now reach'd the Ears of *Italy*, and the Credit of their Taste had drawn over from thence, without any more particular Invitation, one of their capital Singers, the famous Signior *Cavaliero Nicolini*: From whose Arrival, and the Impatience of the Town, to hear him, it was concluded, that Operas, being, now, so completely provided, could not fail of Success; and that, by making *Swiney* sole Director of them, the Profits must be an ample Compensation, for his Resignation of the Actors. This Matter being thus adjusted, by *Swiney's* Acceptance of the Opera only to be perform'd at the *Hay-Market* House; the Actors were all order'd to return to *Drury-Lane*, there to remain (under the Patentees) her Majesty's only Company of Comedians.

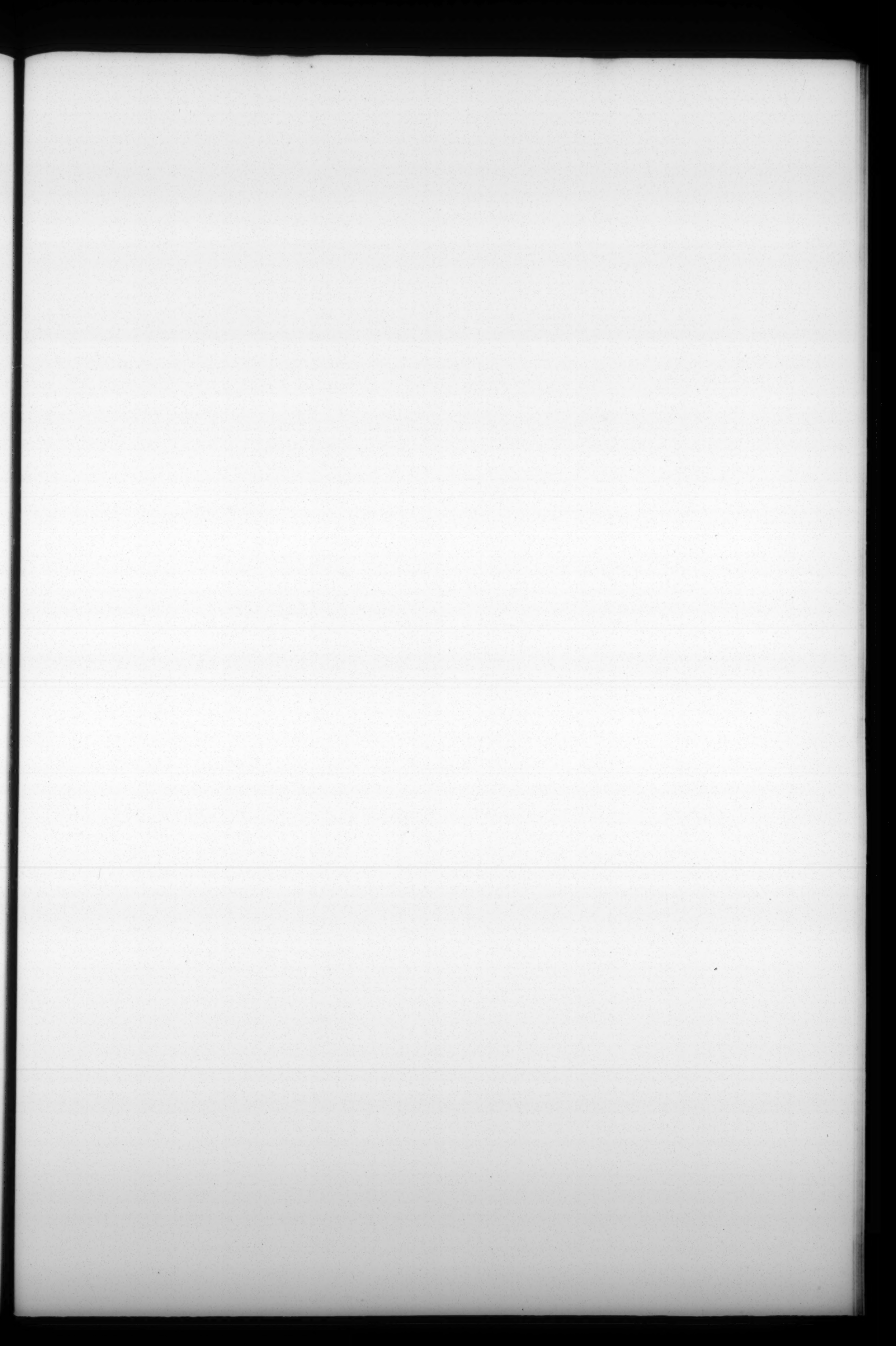


CHAP. XII.

A short View of the Opera, when first divided from the Comedy. Plays recover their Credit. The old Patentee uneasy at their Success. Why. The Occasion of Colonel Brett's throwing up his Share in the Patent. The Consequences of it. Anecdotes of Goodman the Actor. The Rate of favourite Actors, in his Time. The Patentees, by endeavouring to reduce their Price, lose them all a second time. The principal Comedians return to the Hay-Market in Shares with Swiney. They alter that Theatre. The original and present Form of the Theatre in Drury-Lane, compar'd. Operas fall off. The Occasion of it. Farther Observations upon them. The Patentee dispossess'd of Drury-Lane Theatre. Mr. Collier, with a new License, heads the Remains of that Company.

PLAYS, and Operas, being thus established, upon separate Interests, they were now left, to make the best of their way, into Favour, by their different Merit. Although the Opera is not a Plant of our Native Growth, nor what our plainer Appetites are fond of, and is of so delicate a Nature, that without excessive Charge, it cannot live long among us; especially while the nicest *Connoisseurs* in Musick

fall





*Cartenope il produsse, e le Sirene
Tutte fur vinte al paragon del Canto:
Fama il guidò sulle Britanne Scene,
E furon Nomì suoi Prodigio e Incanto.*

*Amiconi Pin.
Wagner. Scul.*

fall into such various Heresies in Taste, every Sect pretending to be the true one: Yet, as it is call'd a Theatrical Entertainment, and by its Alliance, or Neutrality, has more, or less affected our Domestick Theatre, a short View of its Progress may be allow'd a Place in our History.

After this new Regulation, the first Opera that appear'd, was *Pyrrhus*. Subscriptions, at that time were not extended, as of late, to the whole Season, but were limited to the first six Days only of a new Opera. The chief Performers, in this, were *Nicolini*, *Valentini*, and Mrs. *Tofts*; and for the inferior Parts, the best that were then to be found. Whatever Praises may have been given to the most famous Voices, that have been heard since *Nicolini*; upon the whole, I cannot but come into the Opinion, that still prevails among several Persons of Condition, who are able to give a Reason for their liking, that no Singer, since his Time, has so justly, and gracefully acquitted himself, in whatever Character he appear'd, as *Nicolini*. At most, the Difference between him, and the greatest Favourite of the Ladies, *Farinelli*, amounted but to this, that he might sometimes more exquisitely surprize us, but *Nicolini* (by pleasing the Eye, as well as the Ear) fill'd us with a more various, and rational Delight. Whether in this Excellence, he has since had any Competitor, perhaps, will be better judg'd, by what the Critical Censor of *Great Britain* says of him in his 115th *Tatler*, viz.

“ *Nico-*

“ *Nicolini* sets off the Character he bears in
 “ an Opera, by his Action, as much as he does
 “ the Words of it, by his Voice; every Limb,
 “ and Finger, contributes to the Part he acts,
 “ infomuch that a deaf Man might go along
 “ with him in the Sense of it. There is scarce
 “ a beautiful Posture, in an old Statue, which
 “ he does not plant himself in, as the different
 “ Circumstances of the Story give occasion for
 “ it.—He performs the most ordinary Action,
 “ in a manner suitable to the Greatness of his
 “ Character, and shews the Prince, even in
 “ the giving of a Letter, or dispatching of a
 “ Message, &c.”

His Voice at this first Time of being among us, (for he made us a second Visit when it was impair'd had all that strong, clear, Sweetness of Tone, so lately admir'd in *Senesino*. A blind Man could scarce have distinguish'd them; but in Volubility of Throat, the former had much the Superiority. This so excellent Performer's Agreement was Eight Hundred Guineas for the Year, which is but an eighth Part more, than half the Sum that has since been given, to several, that could never totally surpass him: The Consequence of which is, that the Losses by Operas, for several Seasons, to the End of the Year 1738, have been so great, that those Gentlemen of Quality, who last undertook the Direction of them, found it ridiculous any longer to entertain the Publick, at so extravagant an Expence, while no one particular Person thought himself oblig'd by it.

Mrs.

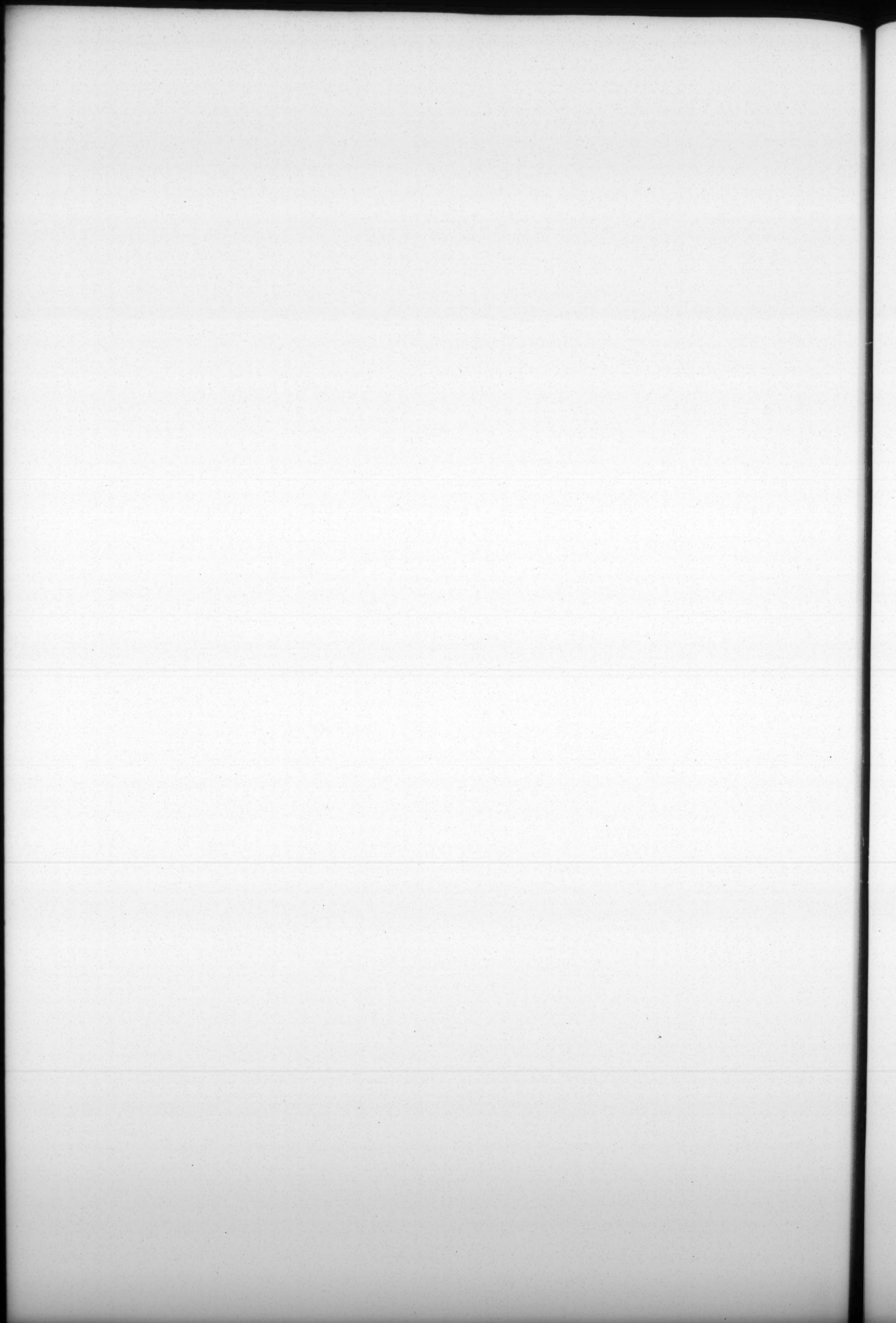


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 “ an Opera, by his Action, as much as he does
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 son thought himself oblig'd by it.

Mrs.





Mrs. *Tofts*, who took her first Grounds of Musick here in her own Country, before the *Italian* Taste had so highly prevail'd, was then not an Adept in it: Yet whatever Defect the fashionably Skilful might find in her manner, she had, in the general Sense of her Spectators, Charms that few of the most learned Singers ever arrive at. The Beauty of her fine proportion'd Figure, and exquisitely sweet, silver Tone of her Voice, with that peculiar, rapid Swiftnefs of her Throat, were Perfections not to be imitated by Art, or Labour. *Valentini* I have already mention'd, therefore need only say farther of him, that though he was every way inferior to *Nicolini*, yet as he had the Advantage of giving us our first Impression of a good Opera Singer, he had still his Admirers, and was of great Service in being so skilful a Second to his Superior.

Three such excellent Performers, in the same kind of Entertainment at once, *England* till this Time had never seen: Without any farther Comparison, then, with the much dearer bought, who have succeeded them; their Novelty, at least, was a Charm that drew vast Audiences of the fine World after them. *Swiney* their sole Director was prosperous, and in one Winter, a Gainer by them of a moderate younger Brother's Fortune. But as Musick, by so profuse a Dispensation of her Beauties, could not always supply our dainty Appetites, with equal Variety, nor for ever please us with the same Objects; the Opera, after one
luxurious.

luxurious Season, like the fine Wife of a roving Husband, began to lose its Charms, and every Day discover'd to our Satiety, Imperfections, which our former Fondness had been blind to: But of this, I shall observe more in its Place: In the mean time, let us enquire into the Productions of our native Theatre.

It may easily be conceiv'd, that by this entire Re-union of the two Companies, Plays must generally have been perform'd to a more than usual Advantage, and Exactness: For now every chief Actor, according to his particular Capacity, piqued himself upon rectifying those Errors, which during their divided State, were almost unavoidable. Such a Choice of Actors added a Richness to every good Play, as it was, then, serv'd up, to the publick Entertainment: The common People crowded to them, with a more joyous Expectation, and those of the higher Taste, return'd to them, as to old Acquaintances, with new Desires, after a long Absence. In a Word, all Parties seem'd better pleas'd, but he, who one might imagine had most Reason to be so, the (lately) sole managing Patentee. He, indeed, saw his Power daily mould'ring from his own Hands, into those of Mr. *Brett*; whose Gentlemanly manner of making every one's Business easy to him, threw their old Master under a Disregard, which he had not been us'd to, nor could with all his happy Change of Affairs, support. Although this grave Theatrical Minister, of whom

whom I have been oblig'd to make such frequent mention, had acquired the Reputation of a most profound Politician, by being often incomprehensible, yet I am not sure, that his Conduct at this Juncture, gave us not an evident Proof, that he was, like other frail Mortals, more a Slave to his Passions, than his Interest; for no Creature ever seem'd more fond of Power, that so little knew how to use it, to his Profit and Reputation; otherwise he could not possibly have been so discontented, in his secure and prosperous State of the Theatre, as to resolve, at all Hazards, to destroy it. We shall now see what infallible Measures he took, to bring this laudable Scheme to Perfection.

He plainly saw, that as this disagreeable Prosperity was chiefly owing to the Conduct of Mr. Brett, there could be no hope of recovering the Stage to its former Confusion, but by finding some effectual Means to make Mr. Brett weary of his Charge: The most probable he could, for the present, think of, in this Distress, was to call in the Adventurers (whom for many Years, by his Defence in Law, he had kept out) now to take care of their visibly improving Interests. This fair Appearance of Equity, being known to be his own Proposal, he rightly guess'd would incline these Adventurers, to form a Majority of Votes on his Side, in all theatrical Questions; and consequently become a Check upon the Power of Mr. Brett, who had so visibly alienated the Hearts of his theatrical Subjects, and now began to govern without him. When the Ad-

Y

venturers.

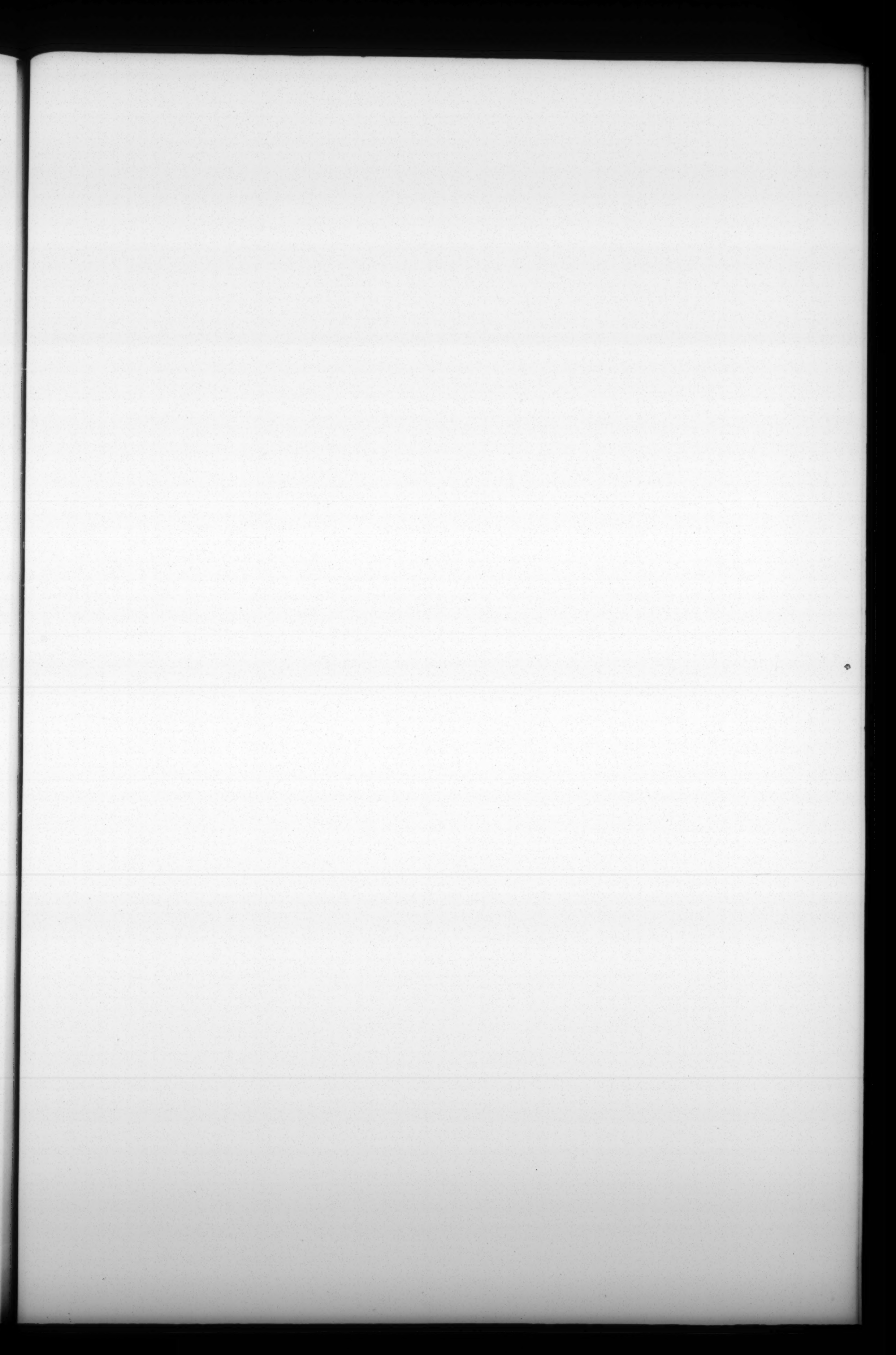
ventures, therefore, were re-admitted to their old Government; after having recommended himself to them, by proposing to make some small Dividend of the Profits (though he did not design that Jest should be repeated) he took care that the Creditors of the Patent, who were, then, no inconsiderable Body, should carry off the every Weeks clear Profits, in proportion to their several Dues and Demands. This Conduct, so speciously just, he had Hopes would let Mr. *Brett* see, that his Share, in the Patent, was not so valuable an Acquisition as, perhaps, he might think it; and probably make a Man of his Turn to Pleasure, soon weary of the little Profit, and great Plague it gave him. Now, though these might be all notable Expedients, yet I cannot say they would have wholly contributed to Mr. *Brett's* quitting his Post, had not a Matter of much stronger Moment, an unexpected Dispute between him, and Sir *Thomas Skipwith*, prevailed with him to lay it down: For in the midst of this flourishing State of the Patent, Mr. *Brett* was surpriz'd with a Subpœna into Chancery, from Sir *Thomas Skipwith*, who alledg'd in his Bill, that the Conveyance he had made of his Interest in the Patent, to Mr. *Brett*, was only intended in Trust. (Whatever the Intent might be, the Deed itself, which I then read, made no mention of any Trust whatever.) But whether Mr. *Brett*, as Sir *Thomas* farther asserted, had previously, or after the Deed was sign'd, given his Word of Honour, that if he should ever make the Stage turn to any Account, or Profit,
he

he would certainly restore it : That indeed, I can say nothing to ; but be the Deed valid, or void, the Facts that apparently follow'd were, that tho' Mr. *Brett*, in his Answer to this Bill, absolutely deny'd his receiving this Assignment, either in Trust, or upon any limited Condition, of what kind soever ; yet he made no farther Defence in the Cause. But since he found Sir *Thomas* had thought fit, on any Account, to sue for the Restitution of it ; and Mr. *Brett* being himself conscious, that, as the World knew, he had paid no Consideration for it : his keeping it might be misconstrued, or not favourably spoken of ; or perhaps finding, tho' the Profits were great, they were constantly swallow'd up (as has been observ'd) by the previous Satisfaction of old Debts, he grew so tir'd of the Plague, and Trouble, the whole Affair had given him, and was likely still to engage him in, that in a few Weeks after, he withdrew himself, from all Concern with the Theatre, and quietly left Sir *Thomas* to find his better Account in it. And thus stood this undecided Right, till upon the Demise of Sir *Thomas*, Mr. *Brett* being allow'd the Charges he had been at, in this Attendance, and Prosecution of the Union, reconvey'd this Share of the Patent to Sir *George Skipwith*, the Son, and Heir of Sir *Thomas*.

Our Politician, the old Patentee, having thus fortunately got rid of Mr. *Brett*, who had so rashly brought the Patent once more to be a profitable Tenure, was now again at Liberty, to chuse rather to lose all, than not to have it all to himself.

I have, elsewhere, observ'd, that nothing can so effectually secure the Strength, or contribute to the Prosperity of a good Company, as the Directors of it having always, as near as possible, an amicable Understanding, with three or four of their best Actors, whose good, or ill-will, must naturally make a wide Difference, in their profitable, or useless manner of serving them: While the principal are kept reasonably easy, the lower Class can never be troublesome; without hurting themselves: But when a valuable Actor is hardly treated, the Master must be a very cunning Man, that finds his Account in it. We shall now see how far Experience will verify this Observation.

The Patentees thinking themselves secure, in being restor'd to their former absolute Power, over, this, now, only Company, chose rather to govern it by the Reverse of the Method I have recommended: For tho' the daily Charge of their united Company amounted not, by a good deal, to what either of the two Companies, now in *Drury-Lane*, or *Cowent-Garden*, singly, arises; they notwithstanding fell into their former Politicks, of thinking every Shilling taken from a hired Actor, so much clear Gain to the Proprietor: Many of their People, therefore, were actually, if not injudiciously, reduced in their Pay, and others given to understand, the same Fate was design'd them; of which last Number I, myself, was one; which occurs to my Memory, by the Answer I made to one of the Adventurers; who, in Justification





tion of their intended Proceeding told me, that my Salary, tho' it should be less, than it was, by ten Shillings a Week, would still be more than ever *Goodman* had, who was a better Actor, than I could pretend to be: To which I reply'd, This may be true, but then you know, Sir, it is as true, that *Goodman* was forced to go upon the High-way for a Livelihood. As this was a known Fact of *Goodman*, my mentioning it, on that Occasion, I believe, was of Service to me; at least my Salary was not reduced after it. To say a Word or two more of *Goodman*, so celebrated an Actor, in his Time, perhaps may set the Conduct of the Patentees in a clearer Light. Tho' *Goodman* had left the Stage, before I came to it, I had some slight Acquaintance with him. About the Time of his being expected to be an Evidence against Sir *John Fenwick*, in the Assassination-Plot, in 1696, I happen'd to meet him at Dinner, at Sir *Thomas Skipwith's*, who, as he was an agreeable Companion himself, liked *Goodman* for the same Quality. Here it was, that *Goodman*, without Disguise, or sparing himself, fell into a laughing Account of several loose Passages of his younger Life; as his being expell'd the University of *Cambridge*, for being one of the hot-headed Sparks, who were concern'd in the cutting, and defacing the Duke of *Monmouth's* Picture, then Chancellor of that Place. But this Disgrace, it seems, had not disqualified him for the Stage; which, like the Sea-Service, refuses no Man, for his Morals, that is able-bodied. There, as

an Actor, he soon grew into a different Reputation; but whatever his Merit might be, the Pay of a hired Hero, in those Days, was so very low, that he was forced, it seems, to take the Air (as he call'd it) and borrow what Money the first Man he met, had about him. But this being his first Exploit of that kind, which the Scantiness of his theatrical Fortune had reduced him to, King *James* was prevail'd upon, to pardon him: Which *Goodman* said, was doing him so particular an Honour, that no Man could wonder, if his Acknowledgment had carried him, a little farther, than ordinary, into the Interest of that Prince: But as he had, lately, been out of Luck, in backing his old Master, he had now no way to get home the Life he was out, upon his Account, but by being under the same Obligations to King *William*.

Another Anecdote of him, though not quite so dishonourably enterprizing, which I had from his own Mouth, at a different Time, will equally shew, to what low shifts in Life, the poor Provision for good Actors, under the early Government of the Patent, reduced them. In the younger Days of their Heroism, Captain *Griffin*, and *Goodman* were confined by their moderate Salaries, to the Oeconomy of lying together, in the same Bed, and having but one whole Shirt between them: One of them being under the Obligation of a Rendezvous, with a fair Lady, insisted upon his wearing it, out of his Turn, which occasion'd so high a Dispute, that the Combat was immediately

diately demanded, and accordingly their Pretensions to it, were decided by a fair Tilt upon the Spot, in the Room, where they lay: But whether *Clytus*, or *Alexander* was obliged to see no Company, till a worse could be wash'd for him, seems not to be a material Point in their History, or to my Purpose.

By this Rate of *Goodman*, who, 'till the Time of his quitting the Stage, never had more, than what is call'd forty Shillings a Week, it may be judg'd, how cheap the Labour of Actors had been formerly; and the Patentees thought it a Folly to continue the higher Price, (which their Divisions had since rais'd them to) now there was but one Market for them; but alas! they had forgot their former fatal Mistake of squabbling with their Actors, in 1695; nor did they make any Allowance for the Changes and Operations of Time, or enough consider the Interest the Actors had in the Lord Chamberlain, on whose Protection they might always rely, and whose Decrees had been less restrain'd by Precedent, than those of a Lord Chancellor.

In this mistaken View of their Interest, the Patentees, by treating their Actors as Enemies, really made them so: And when once the Masters of a hired Company think not their Actors Hearts as necessary, as their Hands, they cannot be said to have agreed for above half the Work, they are able to do in a Day: Or, if an unexpected Success should, notwithstanding, make the Profits, in any gross Disproportion, greater than the Wages; the

Wages will always have something worse, than a Murmur, at the Head of them, that will not only measure the Merit of the Actor, by the Gains of the Proprietor, but will never naturally be quiet, till every Scheme of getting into Property has been tried, to make the Servant his own Master : And this, as far as Experience can make me judge, will always be, in either of these Cases, the State of our *English* Theatre. What Truth there may be, in this Observation, we are now coming to a Proof of.

To enumerate all the particular Acts of Power, in which the Patentees daily bore hard, upon *this*, now only Company of Actors, might be as tedious, as unnecessary ; I shall therefore come, at once, to their most material Grievance, upon which they grounded their Complaint to the Lord Chamberlain, who, in the Year following, 1709, took effectual Measures for their Relief.

The Patentees observing that the Benefit-Plays of the Actors, towards the latter End of the Season, brought the most crowded Audiences in the Year ; began to think their own Interests too much neglected, by these partial Favours of the Town, to their Actors ; and therefore judg'd, it would not be impolitick, in such wholesome annual Profits, to have a Fellow-feeling with them. Accordingly, an *Indulto* was laid of one Third, out of the Profits of every Benefit, for the proper Use, and behoof of the Patent. But, that a clear Judgment may be form'd of the Equity, or Hardship

ship of this Imposition, it will be necessary to shew from whence, and from what Causes, the Actors Claim to Benefits originally proceeded.

During the Reign of King *Charles*, an Actor's Benefit had never been heard of. The first Indulgence of this kind, was given to Mrs. *Barry* (as has been formerly observed) in King *James's* Time, in Consideration of the extraordinary Applause, that had followed her Performance: But there this Favour rested, to her alone, 'till after the Division of the only Company in 1695, at which Time the Patentees were soon reduced to pay their Actors, half in good Words, and half in ready Money. In this precarious Condition, some particular Actors (however binding their Agreements might be) were too poor, or too wise to go to Law with a Lawyer; and therefore rather chose to compound their Arrears, for their being admitted to the Chance of having them made up, by the Profits of a Benefit-Play. This Expedient had this Consequence; that the Patentees, tho' their daily Audiences, might, and did sometimes, mend, still kept the short Subsistence of their Actors, at a stand, and grew more steady in their Resolution so to keep them, as they found them less apt to mutiny, while their Hopes of being clear'd off, by a Benefit, were depending. In a Year, or two, these Benefits grew so advantageous, that they became, at last, the chief Article, in every Actor's Agreement.

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Now though the Agreements of these united Actors, I am speaking of in 1708, were as yet, only Verbal; yet that made no Difference in the honest Obligation, to keep them: But, as Honour at that time happen'd to have but a loose hold of their Consciences, the Patentees rather chose to give it the slip, and went on with their Work without it. No Actor, therefore, could have his Benefit fix'd, 'till he had first sign'd a Paper, signifying his voluntary Acceptance of it, upon the, above, Conditions, any Claims from Custom, to the contrary, notwithstanding. Several at first refus'd to sign this Paper; upon which the next in Rank were offer'd on the same Conditions, to come before the Refusers; this smart Expedient got some few of the Fearful the Preference to their Seniors; who, at last, seeing the Time was too short for a present Remedy, and that they must either come into the Boat, or lose their Tide, were forc'd to comply, with what, they, as yet, silently, resent as the severest Injury. In this Situation, therefore, they chose to let the principal Benefits be over, that their Grievances might swell into some Bulk, before they made any Application for Redress to the Lord-Chamberlain; who, upon hearing their general Complaint, order'd the Patentees to shew cause, why their Benefits had been diminish'd one Third, contrary to the common Usage? The Patentees pleaded the sign'd Agreement, and the Actors Receipts of the other two Thirds, in full Satisfaction. But these

these were prov'd to have been exacted from them, by the Methods already mentioned. They notwithstanding insist upon them as lawful. But as Law, and Equity do not always agree, they were look'd upon as unjust, and arbitrary. Whereupon the Patentees were warn'd at their Peril, to refuse the Actors full Satisfaction. But here it was thought necessary, that Judgment should be for some time respited, till the Actors, who had leave so to do, could form a Body strong enough to make the Inclination of the Lord-Chamberlain to relieve them, practicable.

Accordingly *Swiney* (who was then sole Director of the Opera only) had Permission to enter into a private Treaty, with such of the united Actors in *Drury-Lane*, as might be thought fit to head a Company, under their own Management, and to be Sharers with him in the *Hay-Market*. The Actors chosen for this Charge, were *Wilks*, *Dogget*, *Mrs. Oldfield*, and Myself. But, before I proceed, lest it should seem surprizing, that neither *Betterton*, *Mrs. Barry*, *Mrs. Bracegirdle*, or *Posth*, were Parties in this Treaty; it must be observ'd, that *Betterton* was now seventy-three, and rather chose, with the Infirmities of Age, upon him, to rely on such Salary, as might be appointed him, than to involve himself, in the Cares, and Hurry, that must unavoidably attend the Regulation of a new Company. As to the two celebrated Actress's I have named, this has been my first proper Occasion of making

ing it known, that they had both quitted the Stage the Year before this Transaction was thought of. And *Booth*, as yet, was scarce out of his Minority as an Actor, or only in the Promise of that Reputation, which in about four or five Years after, he happily arriv'd at. However, at this Juncture, he was not so far overlook'd, as not to be offer'd a valuable Addition to his Salary: But this he declin'd, being, while the Patentees were under this Distress, as much, if not more, in favour, with their chief Manager, as a Schematist, than as an Actor: And indeed he appear'd, to my Judgment, more inclin'd to risque his Fortune in *Drury-Lane*, where he should have no Rival in Parts, or Power, than on any Terms to embark in the *Hay-Market*; where he was sure to meet with Opponents in both. However this his Separation from our Interest, when our All was at stake, afterwards kept his Advancement, to a Share with us, in our more successful Days, longer postpon'd, than otherwise it probably might have been.

When Mrs. *Oldfield* was nominated as a joint Sharer, in our new Agreement to be made with *Swincy*; *Dogget*, who had no Objection to her Merit, insisted that our Affairs could never be upon a secure Foundation, if there was more, than one Sex admitted to the Management of them. He therefore hop'd, that if we offer'd Mrs. *Oldfield*, a *Carte Blanche*, instead of a Share, she would not think herself slighted. This was instantly agreed to, and
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Mrs. *Oldfield* receiv'd it rather as a Favour, than a Disobligation : Her Demands therefore were Two Hundred Pounds a Year certain, and a Benefit clear of all Charges ; which were readily sign'd to. Her Easiness on this Occasion, some Years after, when our Establishment was in Prosperity, made us, with less Reluctancy, advance her Two Hundred Pounds, to Three Hundred Guineas *per Annum*, with her usual Benefit, which upon an Average for several Years, at least, doubled that Sum.

When a sufficient Number of Actors were engag'd, under our Confederacy with *Swinney*, it was then judg'd a proper time, for the Lord-Chamberlain's Power, to operate, which, by lying above a Month dormant, had so far recover'd the Patentees, from any Apprehensions of what might fall upon them, from their late Usurpations on the Benefits of the Actors, that they began to set their Marks upon those who had distinguish'd themselves, in the Application for Redress. Several little Disgraces were put upon them ; particularly in the Disposal of Parts, in Plays to be reviv'd, and as visible a Partiality was shewn in the Promotion of those in their Interest, though their Endeavours to serve them could be of no extraordinary use. How often does History shew us, in the same State of Courts, the same Politics have been practis'd ? All this while, the other Party were passively silent ; 'till one Day, the Actor who particularly solicited their Cause,

Cause, at the Lord-Chamberlain's Office, being shewn there the Order sign'd, for absolutely silencing the Patentees, and ready to be serv'd, flew back with the News to his Companions, then at a Rehearsal, in which he had been wanted; when being call'd to his Part, and something hastily question'd by the Patentee, for his Neglect of Business: This Actor, I say, with an erected Look, and a Theatrical Spirit, at once threw off the Mask, and roundly told him — *Sir, I have now no more Business Here, than you have; in half an Hour, you will neither have Actors to command, nor Authority, to employ them.* — The Patentee, who though he could not readily comprehend his mysterious manner of Speaking, had just a Glimpse of Terror enough from the Words, to soften his Reproof into a cold formal Declaration, *That if he would not do his Work, he should not be paid.* — But now, to complete the Catastrophe of these Theatrical Commotions, enters the Messenger, with the Order of Silence in his Hand, whom the same Actor officiously introduc'd, telling the Patentee, that the Gentleman wanted to speak with him, from the Lord-Chamberlain. When the Messenger had delivered the Order, the Actor throwing his Head over his Shoulder, towards the Patentee, in the manner of *Shakespeare's Harry the Eighth* to Cardinal *Wolfsey*, cry'd — *Read o'er that! and now — to Breakfast, with what Appetite you may.* Tho' these Words might be spoken, in too vindictive, and

and insulting a manner, to be commended; yet from the Fullness of a Heart injuriously treated, and now reliev'd by that instant Occasion, why might they not be pardon'd?

The Authority of the Patent now no longer subsisting, all the confederate Actors immediately walk'd out of the House, to which they never return'd, 'till they became themselves the Tenants, and Masters of it.

Here again, we see an higher Instance of the Authority of a Lord-Chamberlain, than any of those I have elsewhere mentioned: From whence that Power might be deriv'd, as I have already said, I am not Lawyer enough to know; however it is evident that a Lawyer obey'd it, though to his Cost; which might incline one to think, that the Law was not clearly against it: Be that as it may, since the Law has lately made it no longer a Question, let us drop the Enquiry, and proceed to the Facts, which follow'd this Order, that silenc'd the Patent.

From this last injudicious Disagreement of the Patentees with their principal Actors, and from what they had suffered on the same Occasion, in the Division of their only Company in 1695, might we not imagine there was something of Infatuation, in their Management? For though I allow Actors, in general, when they are too much indulg'd, or govern'd by an unsteady Head, to be as unruly a Multitude as Power can be plagued with; yet there is a Medium, which, if cautiously

observed by a candid use of Power, making them always know, without feeling, their Superior, neither suffering their Encroachments, nor invading their Rights, with an immovable Adherence to the accepted Laws, they are to walk by; such a Regulation, I say, has never fail'd, in my Observation, to have made them a tractable, and profitable Society. If the Government of a well-establish'd Theatre were to be compar'd to that of a Nation; there is no one Act of Policy, or Misconduct in the one, or the other, in which the Manager might not, in some parallel Case (laugh, if you please) be equally applauded, or condemned with the Statesman. Perhaps this will not be found so wild a Conceit, if you look into the 193d *Tatler*, Vol. 4. where the Affairs of the State, and those of the very Stage, which I am now treating of, are, in a Letter from *Dorcas* the Promptor, compar'd, and with a great deal of Wit and Humour, set upon an equal Foot of Policy. The Letter is suppos'd to have been written, in the last Change of the Ministry in Queen *Anne's* Time. I will therefore venture, upon the Authority of that Author's Imagination, to carry the Comparison as high as it can possibly go, and say, That as I remember one of our Princes, in the last Century, to have lost his Crown, by too arbitrary a Use of his Power, though he knew how fatal the same Measures had been to his unhappy Father before him; why should we wonder, that the same Passions
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taking Possession of Men, in lower Life, by an equally impolitick Usage of their Theatrical Subjects, should have involved the Patentees, in proportionable Calamities.

During the Vacation, which immediately follow'd the Silence of the Patent, both Parties were at leisure to form their Schemes for the Winter: For the Patentee would still hold out, notwithstanding his being so miserably maim'd, or over-match'd: He had no more Regard to Blows, than a blind Cock of the Game; he might be beaten, but would never yield, the Patent was still in his Possession, and the Broad-Seal to it visibly as fresh as ever: Besides, he had yet some Actors in his Service, at a much cheaper Rate than those who had left him, the Salaries of which last, now they would not work for him, he was not oblig'd to pay. In this way of thinking, he still kept together such, as had not been invited over to the *Hay-Market*, or had been influenc'd by *Booth*, to follow his Fortune to *Drury-Lane*.

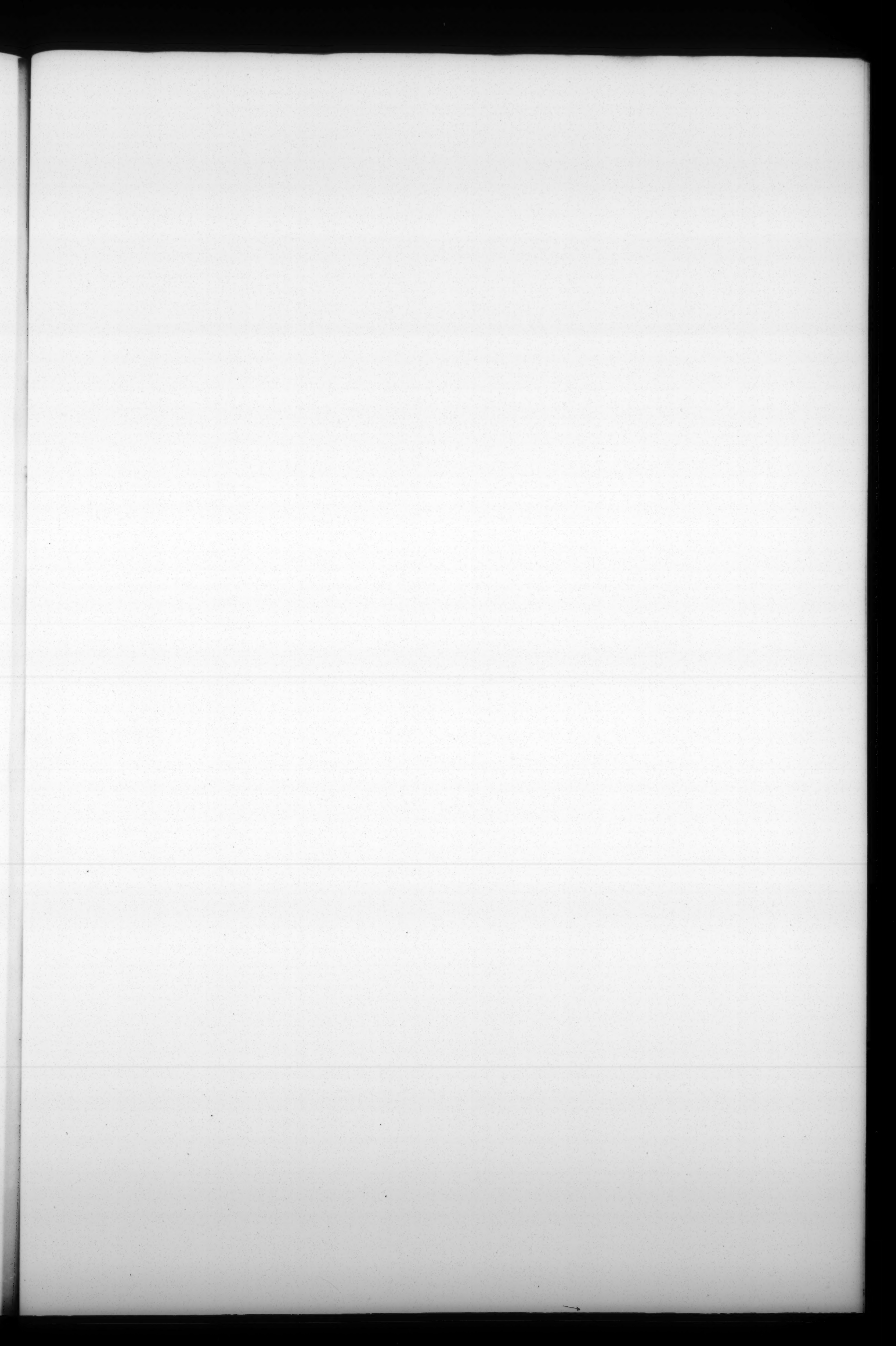
By the Patentee's keeping these Remains of his broken Forces together, it is plain, that he imagin'd this Order of Silence, like others of the same Kind, would be recall'd of course, after a reasonable time of Obedience had been paid to it: But, it seems, he had rely'd too much upon former Precedents; nor had his Politicks yet div'd, into the Secret, that the Court Power, with which the Patent had been so long, and often at variance, had now a

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mind to take the publick Diversions more absolutely into their own Hands: Not that I have any stronger Reasons for this Conjecture, than that the Patent, never after this Order of Silence, got leave to play during the Queen's Reign. But upon the Accession of his late Majesty, Power having then a different Aspect, the Patent found no Difficulty in being permitted to exercise its former Authority for acting Plays, &c. which, however from this time of their lying still, in 1709, did not happen 'till 1714, which the old Patentee never liv'd to see: For he dy'd about six Weeks before the new-built Theatre in *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields* was open'd, where the first Play acted was the *Recruiting Officer*, under the Management of his Heirs and Successors. But of that Theatre, it is not yet time to give any further Account.

The first Point resolv'd on, by the Comedians now re-established in the *Hay-Market*, was to alter the auditory Part of their Theatre; the Inconveniencies of which have been fully enlarged upon in a former Chapter. What embarras'd them most in this Design, was, their want of Time to do it in a more compleat manner than it now remains in, otherwise they had brought it, to the original Model of that in *Drury-Lane*, only in a larger Proportion, as the wider Walls of it would require; as there are not many Spectators who may remember what Form the *Drury-Lane* Theatre stood in, about forty Years ago, before the old Patentee,





*Christophorus Wren Eques. Aedificiorum Regalium per totam ANGLIAM
Praefectus. Basilicae PAULINAE, Templorum, Operumq; Publicorum Urbis LONDINENSIS
Post fatale Incendium. A.D.^m MDCLXVI. Architectus, Curatorq; Generalis.*

A.D. 1713, Aet. 81.

G. Kneller S.R. Imp. et Angl. Eques Aur. Pinx. 1711. J. Smith Fecit.

Sold by J. Smith at 4 Lyon & Crown in Russell Street Covent Garden.

tentee, to make it hold more Money, took it in his Head to alter it, it were but Justice to lay the original Figure, which Sir *Christopher Wren* first gave it, and the Alterations of it, now standing, in a fair Light; that equal Spectators may see, if they were at their choice, which of the Structures would incline them to a Preference. But in this Appeal, I only speak to such Spectators as allow a good Play, well acted, to be the most valuable Entertainment of the Stage. Whether such Plays (leaving the Skill of the dead, or living Actors equally out of the Question) have been more, or less, recommended in their Presentation, by either of these different Forms of that Theatre, is our present Matter of Enquiry.

I must be observed then, that the Area, or Platform of the old Stage, projected about four Foot forwarder, in a Semi-oval Figure, parallel to the Benches of the Pit; and that the former, lower Doors of Entrance for the Actors were brought down between the two foremost (and then only) Pilasters; in the Place of which Doors, now the two Stage-Boxes are fixt. That where the Doors of Entrance now are, there formerly stood two additional Side-Wings, in front to a full Set of Scenes, which had then almost a double Effect, in their Loftiness, and Magnificence.

By this Original Form, the usual Station of the Actors, in almost every Scene, was advanced at least ten Foot nearer to the Audience, than they now can be; because, not only

ly from the Stage's being shorten'd, in front, but likewise from the additional Interposition of those Stage-Boxes, the Actors (in respect to the Spectators, that fill them) are kept so much more backward from the main Audience, than they us'd to be: But when the Actors were in Possession of that forwarder Space, to advance upon, the Voice was then more in the Centre of the House, so that the most distant Ear had scarce the least Doubt, or Difficulty, in hearing what fell from the weakest Utterance: All Objects were thus drawn nearer to the Sense; every painted Scene was stronger; every grand Scene and Dance more extended; every rich or fine-coloured Habit had a more lively Lustre: Nor was the minutest Motion of a Feature (properly changing with the Passion, or Humour it suited) ever lost, as they frequently must be in the Obscurity of too great a Distance: And how valuable an Advantage the Facility of hearing distinctly, is to every well-acted Scene, every common Spectator is a Judge. A Voice scarce rais'd above the Tone of a Whisper, either in Tendernefs, Resignation, innocent Distress, or Jealousy suppress'd, often have as much concern with the Heart, as the most clamorous Passions; and when on any of these Occasions, such affecting Speeches are plainly heard, or lost, how wide is the Difference, from the great or little Satisfaction received from them? To all this, a Master of a Company may say, I now receive Ten Pounds more, than could have

have been taken formerly, in every full House! Not unlikely. But might not his House be oftener full, if the Auditors were oftener pleas'd? Might not every bad House too, by a Possibility of being made every Day better, add as much to one Side of his Account, as it could take from the other? if what I have said, carries any Truth in it, why might not the original Form of this Theatre be restor'd? but let this Digression avail what it may, the Actors now return'd to the *Hay-Market*, as I have observ'd, wanting nothing but length of Time to have govern'd their Alteration of that Theatre, by this original Model of *Drury-Lane*, which I have recommended. As their time therefore was short, they made their best use of it; they did something to it: They contracted its Wideness, by three Ranges of Boxes on each Side, and brought down its enormous high Ceiling, within so proportionable a Compass, that it effectually cur'd those hollow Undulations of the Voice formerly complain'd of. The Remedy had its Effect; their Audiences exceeded their Expectation. There was now no other Theatre open against them; they had the Town to themselves; they were their own Masters, and the Profits of their Industry came into their own Pockets.

Yet with all this fair Weather, the Season of their uninterrupted Prosperity was not yet arriv'd; for the great Expence, and thinner Audiences of the Opera (of which they then were equally Directors) was a constant Draw-

back upon their Gains, yet not so far, but that their Income this Year was better than in their late Station at *Drury-Lane*. But by the short Experience we had then had of Operas; by the high Reputation they seem'd to have been arriv'd at, the Year before; by their Power of drawing the whole Body of Nobility, as by Enchantment, to their Solemnities; by that Prodigality of Expence, at which they were so willing to support them; and from the late extraordinary Profits *Swiney* had made of them; what Mountains did we not hope from this Mole-hill? But alas! the fairy Vision was vanish'd, this Bridal Beauty was grown familiar to the general Taste, and Satety began to make Excuses for its want of Appetite: Or what is still stranger, its late Admirers now as much valued their Judgment, in being able to find out the Faults of the Performers, as they had before, in discovering their Excellencies. The Truth is, that this kind of Entertainment being so entirely sensual, it had no Possibility of getting the better of our Reason, but by its Novelty; and that Novelty could never be supported but by an annual Change of the best Voices, which like the finest Flowers bloom but for a Season, and when that is over, are only dead Nose-gays. From this Natural Cause, we have seen within these two Years, even *Farinelli* singing to an Audience of five and thirty Pounds; and yet, if common Fame may be credited, the same Voice, so neglected in one Country, has
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in another had Charms sufficient to make that Crown sit easy on the Head of a Monarch, which the Jealousy of Politicians (who had their Views in his keeping it) fear'd without some such extraordinary Amusement, his Satiety of Empire might tempt him, a second time, to resign.

There is too, in the very Species of an *Italian* Singer, such an innate, fantastical Pride, and Caprice, that the Government of them (here at least) is almost impracticable. This Distemper, as we were not sufficiently warn'd, or apprized of, threw our musical Affairs into Perplexities, we knew not easily how to get out of. There is scarce a sensible Auditor in the Kingdom, that has not, since that time, had Occasion to laugh at the several Instances of it: But what is still more ridiculous, these costly Canary-Birds have sometimes infected the whole Body of our dignified Lovers of Musick, with the same childish Animosities: Ladies have been known to decline their Visits, upon Account of their being of a different musical Party. *Cæsar*, and *Pompey* made not a warmer Division, in the *Roman* Republick, than those Heroines, their Country Women, the *Faustina* and *Cuzzoni* blew up in our Commonwealth, of Academical Musick, by their implacable Pretensions to Superiority! And while this Greatness of Soul, is their unalterable Virtue, it will never be practicable to make two capital Singers of the same Sex, do as they should do in one Opera, at the same time! no, not tho' *England* were to double the Sums

344 *The LIFE of*

it has already thrown after them : For even in their own Country, where an extraordinary Occasion has called a greater Number of their best, to sing together, the Mischief they have made has been proportionable ; an Instance of which, if I am rightly inform'd, happen'd at *Parma*, where upon the Celebration of the Marriage of that Duke, a Collection was made of the most eminent Voices, that Expence, or Interest, could purchase, to give as complete an Opera, as the whole vocal Power of *Italy* could form. But when it came to the Proof of this musical Project, behold ! what woful Work they made of it ! every Performer would be a *Cæsar*, or Nothing ; their several Pretensions to Preference were not to be limited within the Laws of Harmony ; they would all choose their own Songs, but not more to set off themselves, than to oppose, or deprive another of an Occasion to shine : Yet any one would sing a bad Song, provided no body else had a good one, till at last, they were thrown together like so many feather'd Warriors, for a Battle-royal, in a Cock-pit, where every one was oblig'd to kill another, to save himself ! What Pity it was these forward Misses, and Masters of Musick had not been engag'd to entertain the Court of some King of *Morocco*, that could have known a good Opera from a bad one ! with how much Ease would such a Director have brought them to better Order ? But alas ! as it has been said of greater Things,

Suis et ipsa Roma viribusruit. Hor.

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When Fools fall
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WESTMINSTER HALL. | THE FIRST DAY OF TERM. | A SATIRICAL POEM



When Fools fall out, for ev'ry Flan'
They run horn mad to go to Law,
Hedge av'ry, a wrong plac'd Gate,
To serve to spend a whole Estate;
For case the Lawyer says is good,
And Justice cannot be withstood;
From tedious Procefs from above
From Office they to Office move;

Thro' Pleas Demurrers the Dev'l ball
At length they bring it to the Hall,
The Dreadfull Hall by Rufus rais'd,
For lofty Gothick Arches prais'd;
The First of TERM, the fatal day
Doth various Images convey;
First from y^e Courts wth clam'rous bawl
The Criers their Attorneys call:

One off Gown, discreet and wise,
By Proper means his Wits tries;
From Wreathocks bangs not Right or Law;
Haburas his trembling Clients cause;
This Emans his Handkerchief whilst that
Gives the kind coling; Aymph his Hat;
Here one in Love with Chivveters
Minds Singing more than Law Affairs.

A Sergeant limping on behind
Shows Justice Lame, as well as Blind,
To gain new Clients some dispute,
Other protract an Antient Suit,
Jargon and Noise alone prevail —
While Sense and Reasons sure to fail;
At Babel thus Law Terms began —
And now at Westm — er go on.



Henricus Sacheverell S.T.P.

T. Gibson Pinx.

Imperial *Rome* fell, by the too great Strength of its own Citizens! So fell this mighty Opera, ruin'd by the too great Excellency of its Singers! For, upon the whole, it proved to be as barbarously bad, as if Malice it self had compos'd it.

Now though something of this kind, equally provoking, has generally embarrass'd the State of Operas, these thirty Years; yet it was the Misfortune of the managing Actors, at the *Hay-Market*, to have felt the first Effects of it: The Honour of the Singer, and the Interest of the Undertaker, were so often at Variance, that the latter began to have but a bad Bargain of it. But not to impute more to the Caprice of those Performers, than was really true, there were two different Accidents, that drew Numbers from our Audiences, before the Season was ended; which were, another Company permitted to act in *Drury-Lane*, and the long Trial of Doctor *Sacheverel*, in *Westminster-Hall*: By the way, it must be observed, that this Company was not under the Direction of the Patent (which continued still silenc'd) but was set up by a third Interest, with a License from Court. The Person to whom this new License was granted, was *William Collier*, Esq; a Lawyer of an enterprizing Head, and a jovial Heart; what sort of Favour he was in, with the People, then, in Power, may be judg'd, from his being often admitted to partake with them those detach'd Hours of Life, when Business was to give way to Pleasure:

But this was not all his Merit, he was, at the same Time, a Member of Parliament for *Truro* in *Cornwall*, and we cannot suppose a Person so qualified could be refused such a Trifle, as a License to head a broken Company of Actors. This sagacious Lawyer, then, who had a Lawyer to deal with, observing that his Antagonist kept Possession of a Theatre, without making use of it, and for which he was not obliged to pay Rent, unless he actually *did* use it, wisely conceived it might be the Interest of the joint Landlords, since their Tenement was in so precarious a Condition, to grant a Lease to one, who had an undisputed Authority, to be liable, by acting Plays in it, to pay the Rent of it; especially when he tempted them with an Offer of raising it from three, to four Pounds *per Diem*. His Project succeeded, the Lease was sign'd; but the Means of getting into Possession were to be left to his own Cost, and Discretion. This took him up but little Time, he immediately laid Siege to it, with a sufficient Number of Forces, whether lawless, or lawful, I forget, but they were such as obliged the old Governor to give it up; who, notwithstanding had got Intelligence of his Approaches, and Design, time enough to carry off every thing, that was worth moving, except a great Number of old Scenes, and new Actors, that could not easily follow him.

A ludicrous Account of this Transaction, under fictitious Names, may be found in the 99th *Tatler*, Vol. 2. which this Explanation may
now

now render more intelligible, to the Readers of that agreeable Author.

This other new License being now in Possession of the *Drury-Lane* Theatre; those Actors, whom the Patentee, ever since the Order of Silence, had retain'd in a State of Inaction, all to a Man came over to the Service of *Collier*. Of these, *Booth* was then the chief. The Merit of the rest had as yet made no considerable Appearance, and as the Patentee had not left a Rag of their Cloathing behind him, they were but poorly equip'd for a publick Review; consequently, at their first Opening, they were very little able to annoy us. But during the Trial of *Sacheverel*, our Audiences were extremely weaken'd, by the better Rank of People's daily attending it: While, at the same time, the lower Sort, who were not equally admitted to that grand Spectacle, as eagerly crowded into *Drury-Lane*, to a new Comedy, call'd *The fair Quaker of Deal*. This Play, having some low Strokes of natural Humour in it, was rightly calculated, for the Capacity of the Actors, who play'd it, and to the Taste of the Multitude, who were now, more dispos'd, and at leisure to see it: But the most happy Incident, in its Fortune, was the Charm of the fair Quaker, which was acted by Miss *Santlow*, (afterwards Mrs. *Booth*) whose Person was then in the full Bloom of what Beauty she might pretend to: Before this, she had only been admired as the most excellent Dancer; which, perhaps, might not a little contribute

contribute to the favourable Reception she now met with, as an Actress, in this Character, which so happily suited her Figure, and Capacity: The gentle Softness of her Voice, the composed Innocence of her Aspect, the Modesty of her Dress, the reserved Decency of her Gesture, and the Simplicity of the Sentiments, that naturally fell from her, made her seem the amiable Maid she represented: In a Word, not the enthusiastick Maid of *Orleans*, was more serviceable of old, to the *French* Army, when the *English* had distressed them, than this fair Quaker was, at the Head of that dramatick Attempt, upon which the Support of their weak Society depended.

But when the Trial, I have mention'd, and the Run of this Play was over, the Tide of the Town beginning to turn again in our Favour, Collier was reduced to give his theatrical Affairs a different Scheme; which advanced the Stage another Step towards that Settlement, which, in my Time was of the longest Duration.





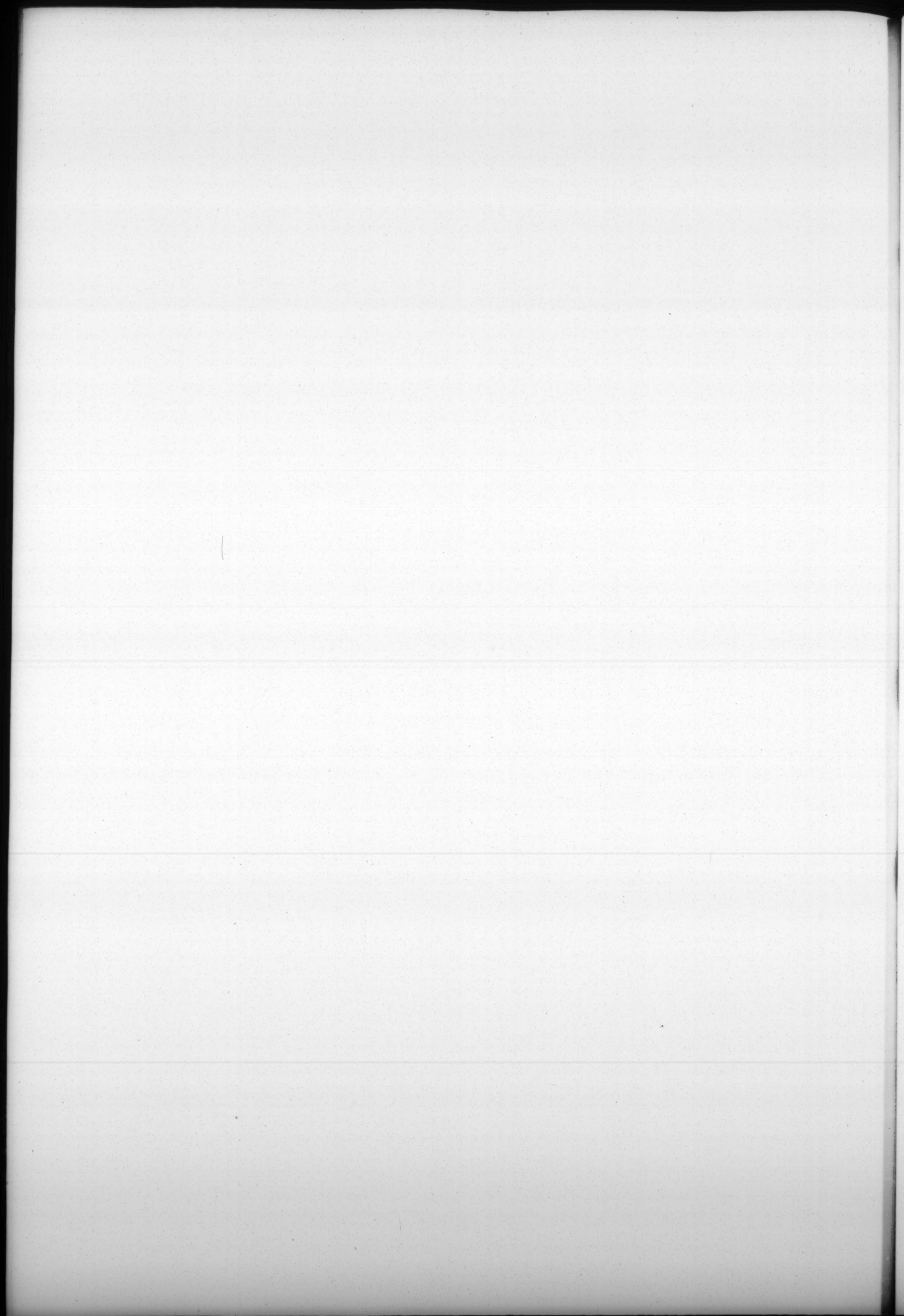
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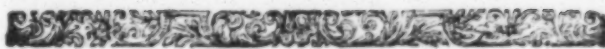
LA PUCELLE D'ORLEANS

From a Portrait in the Town Hall at Orleans.

HENRY VI. Part I. Act I. Scene V.

London. Pub. June 12. 790. by E. Harding. 132. Fleet Street.





C H A P. XII.

The Patentee, having now no Actors, rebuilds the new Theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. A Guess at his Reasons for it. More Changes, in the State of the Stage. The Beginning of its better Days, under the Triumvirate of Actors. A Sketch of their governing Characters.

AS coarse Mothers may have comely Children; so Anarchy has been the Parent of many a good Government; and by a Parity of possible Consequences we shall find, that from the frequent Convulsions of the Stage, arose, at last, its longest Settlement, and Prosperity; which many of my Readers (or if I should happen to have but few of them, many of my Spectators, at least) who, I hope, have not yet liv'd half their Time, will be able to remember.

Though the Patent had been often under Distresses, it had never felt any Blow, equal to this unrevoked Order of Silence; which it is not easy to conceive, could have fallen upon any other Person's Conduct, than that of the old Patentee: For if he was conscious, of his being under the Subjection of that Power, which had silenc'd him, why would he incur the Danger of a Suspension, by his so obiti-

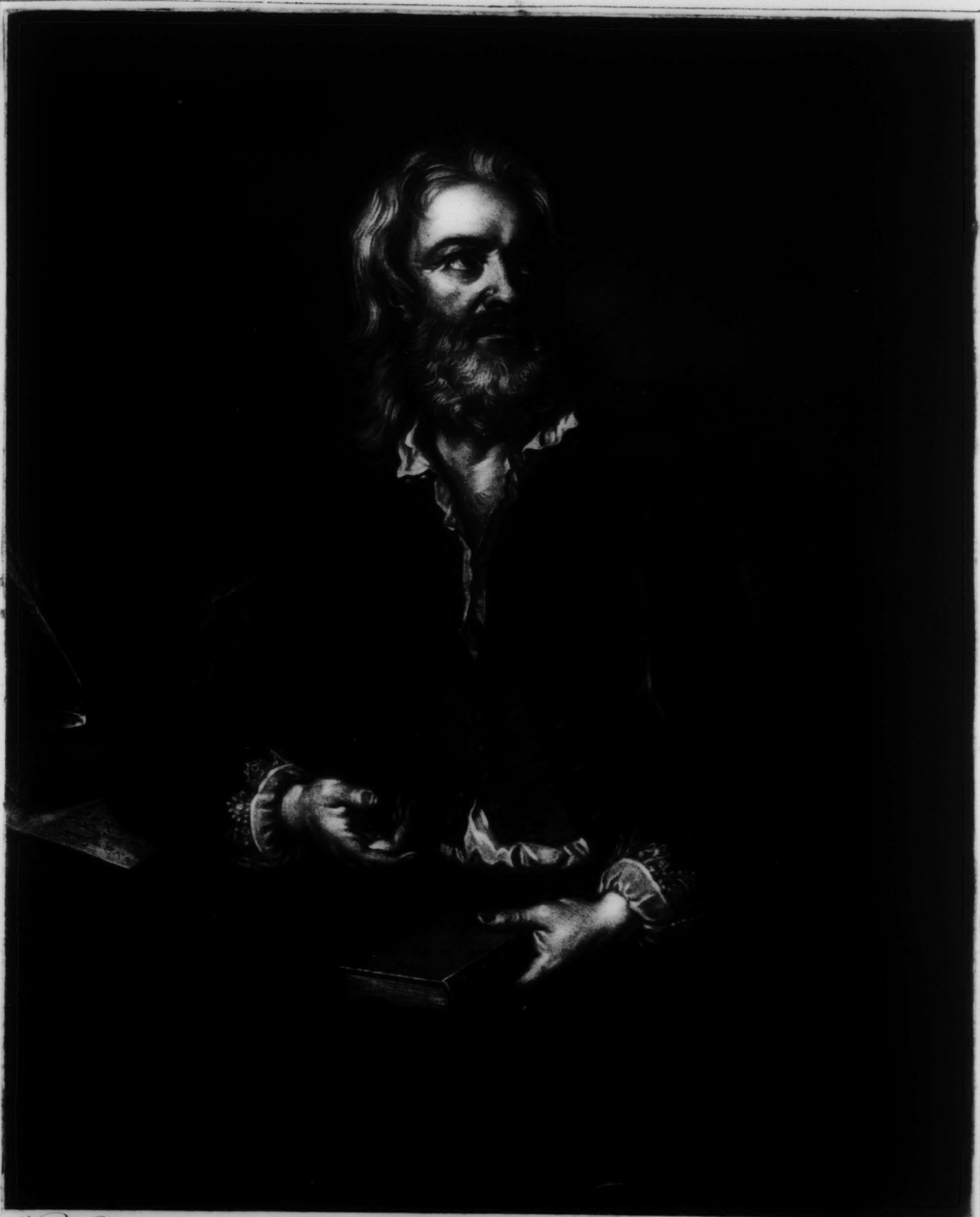
obstinate, and impolitick Treatment of his Actors? If he thought such Power over him illegal, how came he to obey it now, more than before, when he slighted a former Order, that injoin'd him to give his Actors their Benefits, on their usual Conditions? But to do him Justice, the same Obstinacy, that involv'd him, in these Difficulties, at last, preserv'd to his Heirs the Property of the Patent, in its full Force, and Value; yet to suppose that he foresaw a milder use of Power, in some future Prince's Reign, might be more favourable to him, is begging at best but a cold Question. But whether he knew that this broken Condition of the Patent would not make his troublesome Friends, the Adventurers, fly from it, as from a falling House, seems not so difficult a Question. However, let the Reader form his own Judgment of them, from the Facts, that follow'd: It must therefore be observ'd, that the Adventurers seldom came near the House, but when there was some visible Appearance of a Dividend: But I could never hear, that upon an ill Run of Audiences they had ever returned, or brought in a single Shilling, to make good the Deficiencies of their daily Receipts. Therefore, as the Patentee, in Possession, had alone, for several Years, supported, and stood against this Uncertainty of Fortune, it may be imagin'd, that his Accounts were under so voluminous a Perplexity, that few of those Adventurers would have Leisure, or Capacity enough to unravel them:

them : And as they had formerly thrown away their Time, and Money at Law, in a fruitless Enquiry into them, they now seem'd to have intirely given up their Right and Interest : And, according to my best Information, notwithstanding the subsequent Gains of the Patent have been sometimes extraordinary, the farther Demands, or Claims of Right, of the Adventurers, have lain dormant, above these five and twenty Yeers.

Having shewn by what means *Collier* had dispossest this Patentee, not only of the *Drury-Lane* House, but likewise of those few Actors, which he had kept, for some time unemploy'd in it ; we are now led to consider another Project of the same Patentee, which, if we are to judge of it by the Event, has shewn him more a Wise, than a Weak Man ; which I confess at the time he put it in Execution, seem'd not so clear a Point : For notwithstanding he now saw the Authority, and Power of his Patent was superseded, or was at best but precarious, and that he had not one Actor left, in his Service ; yet under all these Dilemma's, and Distresses, he resolv'd upon rebuilding the New Theatre in *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields*, of which he had taken a Lease, at a low Rent, ever since *Betterton's* Company had first left it. This Conduct seem'd too deep for my Comprehension ! What are we to think of his taking this Lease, in the height of his Prosperity, when he could have no Occasion for it ? Was he a Prophet ? Could he then fore-see.

see, he should, one time or other, be turn'd out of *Drury-Lane*? Or did his mere Appetite of Architecture urge him to build a House, while he could not be sure, he should ever have leave to make use of it? But of all this, we may think as we please; whatever was his Motive, he, at his own Expence, in this Interval of his having nothing else to do, rebuilt that Theatre from the Ground, as it is now standing. As for the Order of Silence he seem'd little concern'd at it, while it gave him so much uninterrupted Leisure to supervise a Work, which he naturally took Delight in.

After this Defeat of the Patentee, the Theatrical Forces of *Collier* in *Drury-Lane*, notwithstanding their having drawn the Multitude after them, for about three Weeks, during the Trial of *Sacheverel*, had made but an indifferent Campaign, at the end of the Season. *Collier*, at least, found so little Account in it, that it obliged him to push his Court-Interest (which, wherever the Stage was concern'd, was not inconsiderable) to support him in another Scheme; which was, that in consideration of his giving up the *Drury-Lane* Cloaths, Scenes, and Actors, to *Swinney*, and his joint Sharers, in the *Hay-Market*, he (*Collier*) might be put into an equal Possession of the *Hay-Market* Theatre, with all the Singers, &c. and be made sole Director of the Opera. Accordingly, by Permission of the Lord Chamberlain, a Treaty was enter'd into, and in a few Days ratified by all Parties, conformable
to



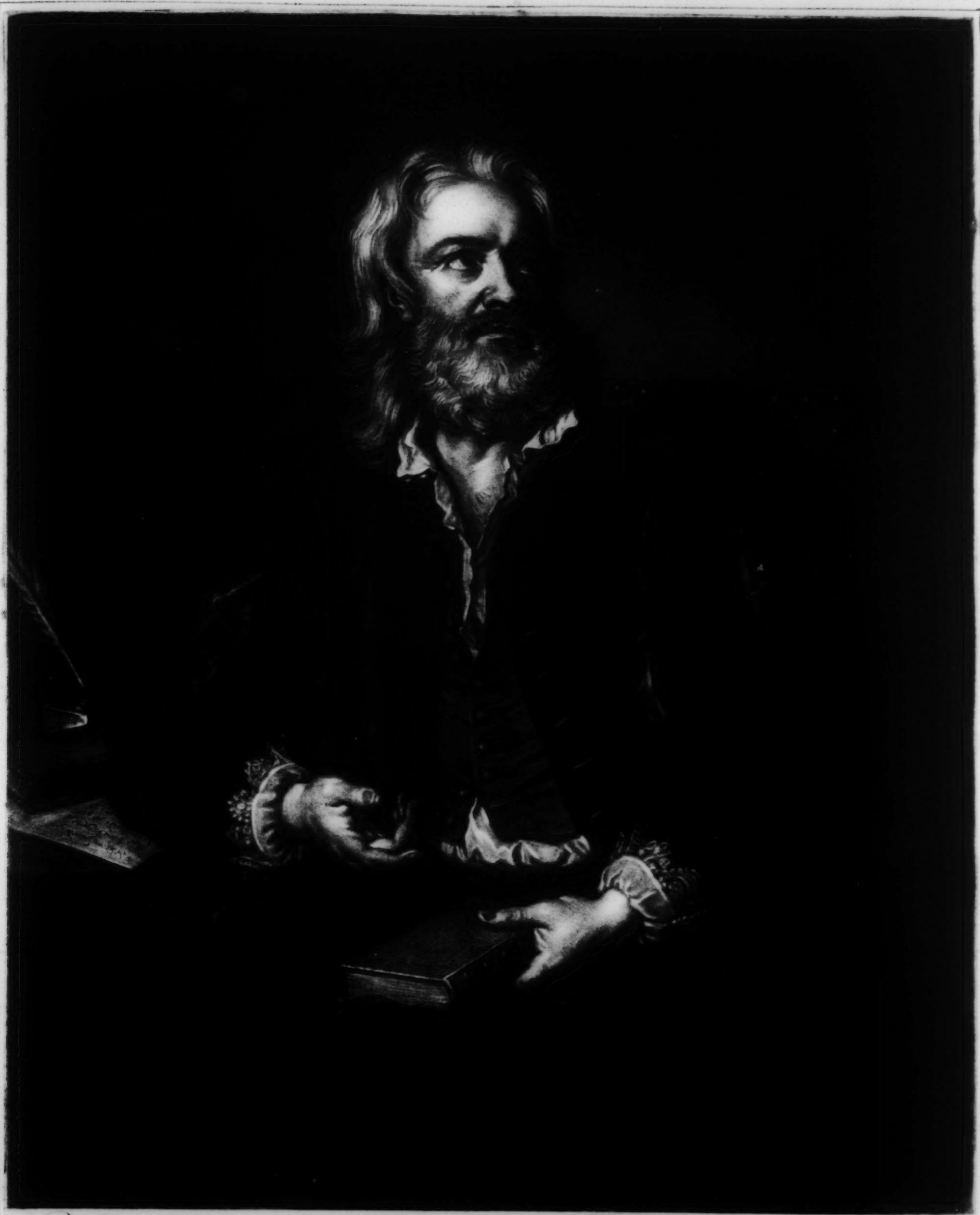
Vanloo Pinx.

Owen M. Swiny Esq.

J. Faber fecit 1752.

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Vanlee Pinx.

Owen M. Swiny Esq.

J. Fisher fecit 1752.



to the said Preliminaries. This was that happy Crisis of Theatrical Liberty, which the labouring Comedians had long sigh'd for; and which, for above twenty Years following, was so memorably fortunate to them.

However, there were two hard Articles, in this Treaty, which though it might be Policy in the Actors to comply with, yet the Imposition of them seem'd little less despotick, than a Tax upon the Poor, when a Government did not want it.

The first of these Articles was, That whereas the sole License for acting Plays, was presum'd to be a more profitable Authority, than that for acting Operas only; that therefore Two Hundred Pounds a Year should be paid to *Collier*, while Master of the Opera, by the Comedians; to whom a verbal Assurance was given by the *Plenipo's* on the Court-side, that while such Payment subsisted, no other Company should be permitted to act Plays against them, within the Liberties, &c. The other Article was, That on every *Wednesday*, whereon an Opera could be perform'd, the Plays should, *touties quoties*, be silent at *Dorset-Lane*, to give the Opera a fairer Chance, for a full House.

This last Article, however partial, in the Intention, was, in its Effect, of great Advantage to the sharing Actors: For in all publick Entertainments, a Day's Abstinence naturally increases the Appetite to them: Our every *Thursday's* Audience, therefore, was visibly the better,

better, by thus making the Day before it a Fast. But as this was not a Favour design'd us, this Prohibition of a Day, methinks, deserves a little farther Notice, because it evidently took a sixth Part of their Income, from all the hired Actors, who were only paid, in proportion to the Number of acting Days. This extraordinary Regard to Operas, was in effect making the Day-labouring Actors the principal Subscribers to them, and the shutting out People from the Play every *Wednesday*, many murmur'd at, as an Abridgment of their usual Liberty. And tho' I was one of those, who profited by that Order, it ought not to bribe me, into a Concealment of what was then said and thought of it. I remember a Nobleman of the first Rank, then in a high Post, and not out of Court-Favour, said openly behind the Scenes — *It was shameful to take part of the Actors Bread from them to support the silly Diversion of People of Quality.* But alas! what was all this Grievance, when weigh'd against the Qualifications of so grave, and stanch a Senator, as *Collier*? Such visible Merit, it seems, was to be made easy, tho' at the Expence of the — I had almost said, *Honour* of the Court, whose gracious Intention for the Theatrical Common-wealth, might have shone with thrice the Lustre, if such as paltry Price had not been paid for it. But as the Government of the Stage, is but that of the World in Miniature, we ought not to have wonder'd, that *Collier* had Interest enough to
quarter

quarter the Weakness of the Opera, upon the Strength of the Comedy. General good Intentions are not always practicable to a Perfection. The most necessary Law can hardly pass, but a Tenderness to some private Interest, shall often hang such Exceptions upon particular Clauses, 'till at last it comes out lame, and lifeless, with the Loss of half its Force, Purpose, and Dignity. As for Instance; how many fruitless Motions have been made in Parliaments, to moderate the enormous Exactions, in the Practice of the Law? And what sort of Justice must that be call'd, which, when a Man has not a Mind to pay you a Debt of Ten Pounds, it shall cost you Fifty, before you can get it? How long too has the Publick been labouring for a Bridge at *Westminster*? But the Wonder, that it was not built a Hundred Years ago ceases, when we are told, That the Fear of making one End of *London*, as rich, as the other, has been, so long, an Obstruction to it: And though it might seem a still greater Wonder, when a new Law for building one had at last got over that Apprehension, that it should meet with any farther Delay; yet Experience has shewn us, that the Structure of this useful Ornament to our Metropolis has been so clogg'd by private Jobs, that were to be pick'd out of the Undertaking, and the Progress of the Work so disconcerted by a tedious Contention of private Interests, and Endeavours to impose upon the Publick abominable Bargains, that a whole Year was lost, before a single

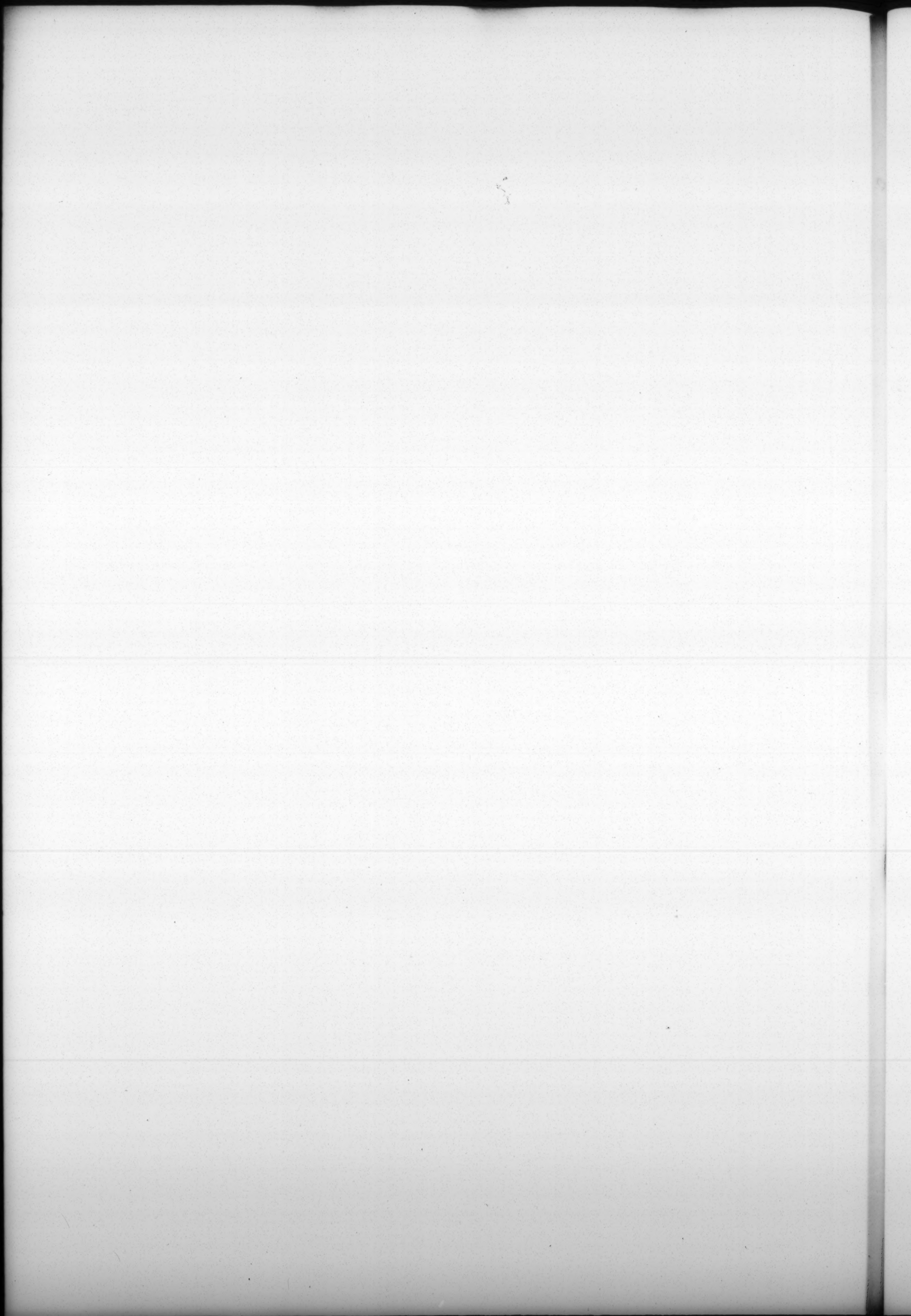
Stone could be laid to its Foundation. But Posterity will owe its Praises, to the Zeal; and Resolution of a truly Noble Commissioner, whose distinguish'd Impatience has broke thro' those narrow Artifices, those false and frivolous Objections, that delay'd it, and has already began to raise, above the Tide, that future Monument of his publick Spirit.

How far all this may be allow'd applicable to the State of the Stage, is not of so great Importance, nor so much my Concern, as that what is observ'd upon it should always remain a memorable Truth, to the Honour of that Nobleman. But now I go on: *Collier* being thus possess'd of his Musickal Government, thought his best way would be to farm it out to a Gentleman, *Aaron Hill*, Esq; (who, he had reason to suppose, knew something more of Theatrical Matters, than himself) at a Rent, if I mistake not, of Six Hundred Pounds *per Annum*: But before the Season was ended (upon what Occasion, if I could remember, it might not be material to say) took it into his Hands again: But all his Skill, and Interest, could not raise the Direction of the Opera, to so good a Post, as he thought due to a Person of his Consideration: He therefore, the Year following, enter'd upon another high-handed Scheme, which, till the Demise of the Queen, turn'd to his better Account.

After the Comedians were in Possession of *Drury-Lane*, from whence, during my time upon the Stage, they never departed, their

Swarm





Swarm of Audiences exceeded all that had been seen, in thirty Years before; which, however, I do not impute so much to the Excellence of their Acting, as to their indefatigable Industry, and good Management; for as I have often said, I never thought, in the general, that we stood in any Place of Comparison with the eminent Actors before us; perhaps too, by there being now an End of the frequent Divisions, and Disorders, that had from time to time broke in upon, and frustrated their Labours, not a little might be contributed to their Success.

Collier, then, like a true liquorish Courtier, observing the Prosperity of a Theatre, which he, the Year before, had parted with, for a worse, began to meditate an Exchange of Theatrical Posts with *Swincy*, who had visibly very fair Pretensions to that he was in, by his being first chosen, by the Court, to regulate, and rescue the Stage from the Disorders it had suffer'd, under its former Managers: Yet *Collier* knew that sort of Merit could stand in no Competition, with his being a Member of Parliament: He therefore had recourse to his Court-Interest (where meer Will, and Pleasure, at that time, was the only Law, that dispos'd of all Theatrical Rights) to oblige *Swincy* to let him be off, from his bad Bargain, for a better. To this, it may be imagin'd, *Swincy* demurr'd, and, as he had Reason, strongly remonstrated against it: But as *Collier* had lifted his Conscience under the Com-

mand of Interest, he kept it to strict Duty, and was immovable; insomuch that Sir *John Vanbrugh*, who was a Friend to *Swincy*, and who by his Intimacy with the People in Power, better knew the Motive of their Actions, advis'd *Swincy* rather to accept of the Change, than by a Non-compliance to hazard his being excluded from any Post, or Concern in either of the Theatres: To conclude, it was not long before *Collier* had procured a new License for acting Plays, &c. for himself, *Wilks*, *Dogget*, and *Cilber*, exclusive of *Swincy*, who by this new Regulation was reduc'd to his *Hobson's* Choice of the Opera.

Swincy being thus transferr'd to the Opera, in the sinking Condition *Collier* had left it, found the Receipts of it, in the Winter following 1711, so far short of the Expences, that he was driven to attend his Fortune in some more favourable Climate, where he remain'd twenty Years an Exile, from his Friends, and Country; tho' there has been scarce an *English* Gentleman, who in his *Tour of France*, or *Italy*, has not renew'd, or created an Acquaintance with him. As this is a Circumstance, that many People may have forgot, I cannot remember it, without that Regard, and Concern it deserves from all that know him: Yet it is some Mitigation of his Misfortune, that since his Return to *England*, his grey Hairs, and cheerful Disposition, have still found a general Welcome among his foreign, and former domestick Acquaintance.

Collier

Collier being now, first-commission'd Manager with the Comedians, drove them too, to the last Inch of a hard Bargain (the natural Consequence of all Treaties between Power, and Necessity.) He not only demanded six hundred a Year, neat Money, the Price at which he had farm'd out his Opera, and to make the Business a *Sine-cure* to him; but likewise insisted, upon a Moiety of the Two hundred, that had been levied upon us the Year before, in Aid of the Operas; in all 700*l*. These large, and ample Conditions, considering in what Hands we were, we resolv'd to swallow without wry Faces; rather chusing to run any Hazard, than contend with a formidable Power, against which we had no Remedy: But so it happen'd, that Fortune took better care of our Interest, than we ourselves had like to have done: For had *Collier* accepted of our first Offer, of an equal Share with us, he had got three hundred Pounds a Year more, by complying with it, than by the Sum he impos'd upon us; our Shares being never less, than a thousand annually, to each of us, 'till the End of the Queen's Reign, in 1714. After which *Collier's* Commission was superseded; his Theatrical Post, upon the Accession of his late Majesty, being given to Sir *Richard Steele*.

From these various Revolutions, in the Government of the Theatre, all owing to the Patentees mistaken Principle of increating their Profits, by too far enslaving their People, and keeping down the Price of good Actors (and I

could almost insist, that giving large Salaries to bad Ones, could not have had a worse Consequence. I say, when it is consider'd, that the Authority for acting Plays, &c. was thought of so little worth, that (as has been observ'd) Sir *Thomas Shipwith* gave away his Share of it, and the Adventurers withdrew from it; that Mr. *Collier*, at another time, had voluntarily resign'd it; that *John Vanbrugh* (merely to get the Rent of his new House paid) had, by Leave of the Court, farm'd out his License, to *Swinn*, who without some Hesitation had ventur'd upon it; let me say again, out of this low Condition of the Theatre, was it not owing to the Industry of three, or four Comedians, that a new Place was now created for the Crown to give away, without any Expence attending it, well worth the Acceptance of any Gentleman, whose Merit, or Services had no higher Claim to Preferment, and which *Collier*, and Sir *Richard Steele*, in the two last Reigns, successively enjoy'd? Tho', I believe, I may have said something like this, in a former Chapter, I am not-unwilling it should be twice taken notice of.

We are now come to that firm Establishment of the Theatre, which except the Admittance of *Booth* into a Share, and *Dogget's* retiring from it, met with no Change, or Alteration, for above twenty Years after.

Collier, as has been said, having accepted of a certain Appointment of seven hundred *per Annum*; *Wilks*, *Dogget*, and Myself were
now

now the only acting Managers, under the Queen's Licence; which being a Grant, but during Pleasure, oblig'd us to a Conduct that might not undeserve that Favour. At this Time we were all in the Vigour of our Capacities as Actors; and our Prosperity enabled us, to pay, at least, double the Salaries, to what the same Actors had usually receiv'd, or could have hoped for under the Government of the Patentees. *Dogget*, who was naturally an Oeconomist, kept our Expences, and Accounts, to the best of his Power, within regulated Bounds, and Moderation. *Wilks*, who had a stronger Passion, for Glory, than Lucre, was a little apt to be lavish, in what was not always as necessary for the Profit, as the Honour of the Theatre: For Example, at the Beginning of almost every Season, he would order two or three Suits to be made, or refresh'd, for Actors of moderate Consequence, that his having constantly a new one for himself, might seem less particular, tho' he had, as yet, no new Part for it. This expeditious Care of doing us good, without waiting for our Consent to it, *Dogget* always look'd upon, with the Eye of a Man, in Pain: But I, who hated Pain, (tho' I as little liked the Favour, as *Dogget* himself) rather chose to laugh at the Circumstance, than complain of what I knew was not to be cured, but by a Remedy worse than the Evil. Upon these Occasions, therefore, whenever I saw him, and his Followers, so prettily dress'd out, for an old Play, I only com-

commended his Fancy; or at most but whisper'd him not to give himself so much trouble, about others, upon whose Performance it would but be thrown away: To which, with a smiling Air of Triumph, over my want of Penetration, he has reply'd—Why, now, that was what I really did it for! to shew others, that I love to take care of them, as well as of myself. Thus whenever he made himself easy, he had not the least Conception, let the Expence be what it would, that we could possibly dislike it. And from the same Principle, provided a thinner Audience were liberal of their Applause, he gave himself little Concern about the Receipt of it. As in these different Tempers of my Brother-Managers, there might be equally something right, and wrong, it was equally my Business to keep well with them both: And tho' of the two, I was rather inclin'd to *Dogget's* way of thinking, yet I was always under the disagreeable Restraint of not letting *Wilks* see it: Therefore, when in any material Point of Management, they were ready to come to a Rupture, I found it adviseable to think neither of them, absolutely in the wrong; but by giving to one as much of the Right, in his Opinion this way, as I took from the other in that; their Differences were sometimes soft'ned into Concessions, that I have reason to think prevented many ill Consequences, in our Affairs, that otherwise might have attended them. But this was always to be done with a very gentle Hand; for as *Wilks* was apt to
be

he easily hurt, by Opposition, so when he felt it he was as apt to be insupportable. However, there were some Points, in which we were always unanimous. In the twenty Years, while we were our own Directors, we never had a Creditor that had occasion to come twice for his Bill; every *Monday* Morning discharged us of all Demands, before we took a Shilling for our own Use. And from this time, we neither ask'd any Actor, nor were desired by them, to sign any written Agreement (to the best of my Memory) whatsoever: The Rate of their respective Salaries were only enter'd in our daily Pay-Roll; which plain Record every one look'd upon, as good as City-Security: For where an honest Meaning is mutual, the mutual Confidence will be Bond enough, in Conscience, on both sides: But that I may not ascribe more to our Conduct than was really its Due, I ought to give Fortune her Share of the Commendation; for had not our Success exceeded our Expectation, it might not have been in our Power, so thoroughly to have observ'd those laudable Rules of Oeconomy, Justice, and Lenity, which so happily supported us: But the Severities, and Oppression we had suffer'd under our former Masters, made us incapable of imposing them upon others; which gave our whole Society the cheerful Looks of a rescued People. But notwithstanding this general Cause of Content, it was not above a Year or two before the Imperfection of human Nature began to
shew

shew itself in contrary Symptoms. The Merit of the Hazards which the Managers had run, and the Difficulties they had combated, in bringing to Perfection, that Revolution, by which they had all so amply profited, in the Amendment of their general Income, began now to be forgotten; their Acknowledgments, and thankful Promises of Fidelity, were no more repeated, or scarce thought obligatory: Ease and Plenty, by an habitual Enjoyment, had lost their Novelty, and the Largeness of their Salaries, seem'd rather lessen'd than advanc'd, by the extraordinary Gains of the Undertakers; for that is the Scale, in which the hired Actor will always weigh his Performance; but whatever Reason there may seem to be, in his Case, yet as he is frequently apt to throw a little Self-partiality into the Balance, that Consideration may a good deal alter the Justness of it. While the Actors, therefore, had this way of thinking, happy was it, for the Managers, that their united Interest was so inseparably the same, and that their Skill and Power in Acting, stood in a Rank so far above the rest, that if the whole Body of private Men had deserted them, it would yet have been an easier Matter for the Managers to have pick'd up Recruits, than for the Deferters to have found proper Officers to lead them. Here, then, in this Distinction lay our Security: Our being Actors ourselves, was an Advantage to our Government, which all former Managers, who were only idle Gentlemen,

lemen, wanted: Nor was our Establishment easily to be broken, while our Health, and Limbs enabled us, to be Joint-labourers in the Work we were Masters of.

The only Actor, who, in the Opinion of the Publick, seem'd to have had a Pretence of being advanc'd to a Share with us, was certainly *Booth*: But when it is consider'd, how strongly he had oppos'd the Measures, that had made us Managers, by setting himself (as has been observ'd) at the Head of an opposite Interest, he could not as yet, have much to complain of: Beside, if the Court had thought him, now, an equal Object of Favour, it could not have been in our Power, to have oppos'd his Preferment: This I mention, not to take from his Merit, but to shew, from what Cause it was not, as yet, better provided for. Therefore it may be no Vanity to say, our having at that time, no visible Competitors on the Stage, was the only Interest, that rais'd us to be the Managers of it.

But here, let me rest a while, and since, at my time of Day, our best Possessions are but Ease, and Quiet, I must be content, if I will have Sallies of Pleasure, to take up with those only; that are to be found in Imagination. When I look back, therefore, on the Storms of the Stage, we had been toss'd in; when I consider, that various Vicissitude of Hopes and Fears, we had for twenty Years struggled with, and found ourselves, at last, thus safely set on Shore, to enjoy the Produce of our own Labours;

bours ; and to have rais'd those Labours by our Skill, and Industry, to a much fairer Profit, than our Task-masters, by all their severe, and griping Government, had ever reap'd from them ; a good-natur'd Reader, that is not offended at the Comparison of great things, with small, will allow was a Triumph, in proportion, equal to those, that have attended the most heroick Enterprizes for Liberty ! What Transport could the first *Brutus* feel, upon his Expulsion of the *Tarquins*, greater than that which now danc'd in the Heart of a poor Actor, who from an injur'd Labourer, unpaid his Hire, had made himself, without Guilt, a legal Manager of his own Fortune ? Let the Grave and Great condemn, or yawn at these low Conceits, but let me be happy, in the Enjoyment of them ! To this Hour my Memory runs o'er that pleasing Prospect of Life past, with little less Delight, than when I was first, in the real Possession of it. This is the natural Temper of my Mind, which my Acquaintance are frequently Witnesses of : And as this was all the Ambition, Providence had made my obscure Condition capable of, I am thankful, that Means were given me to enjoy the Fruits of it.

— *Hoc est*
Vivere bis, vitâ posse priore frui.

Something like the Meaning of this, the less learned Reader may find in my Title Page.

